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Israfel

The Life and Times of Edgar Allan Poe

Volume I

If I could dwell
Where Israfel
Hath dwelt, and he where I,
He might not sing so wildly well
A mortal melody,
While a bolder note than this might swell
From my lyre within the sky.

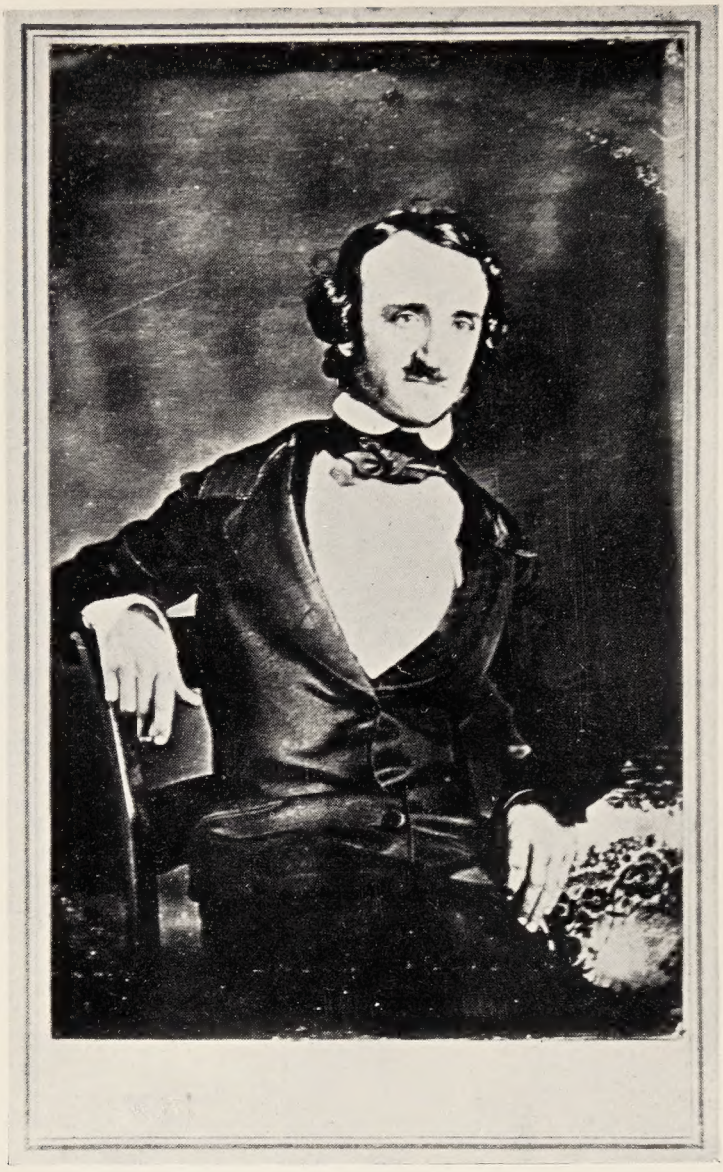
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I am yours
Edgar A. Poe

Edgar Allan Poe as a Young Man

From a daguerreotype, probably taken in Baltimore in the early 1840's

Courtesy of the Maryland Historical Society

Israfel

The Life and Times of Edgar Allan Poe

By
Hervey Allen

In Two Volumes
Volume I

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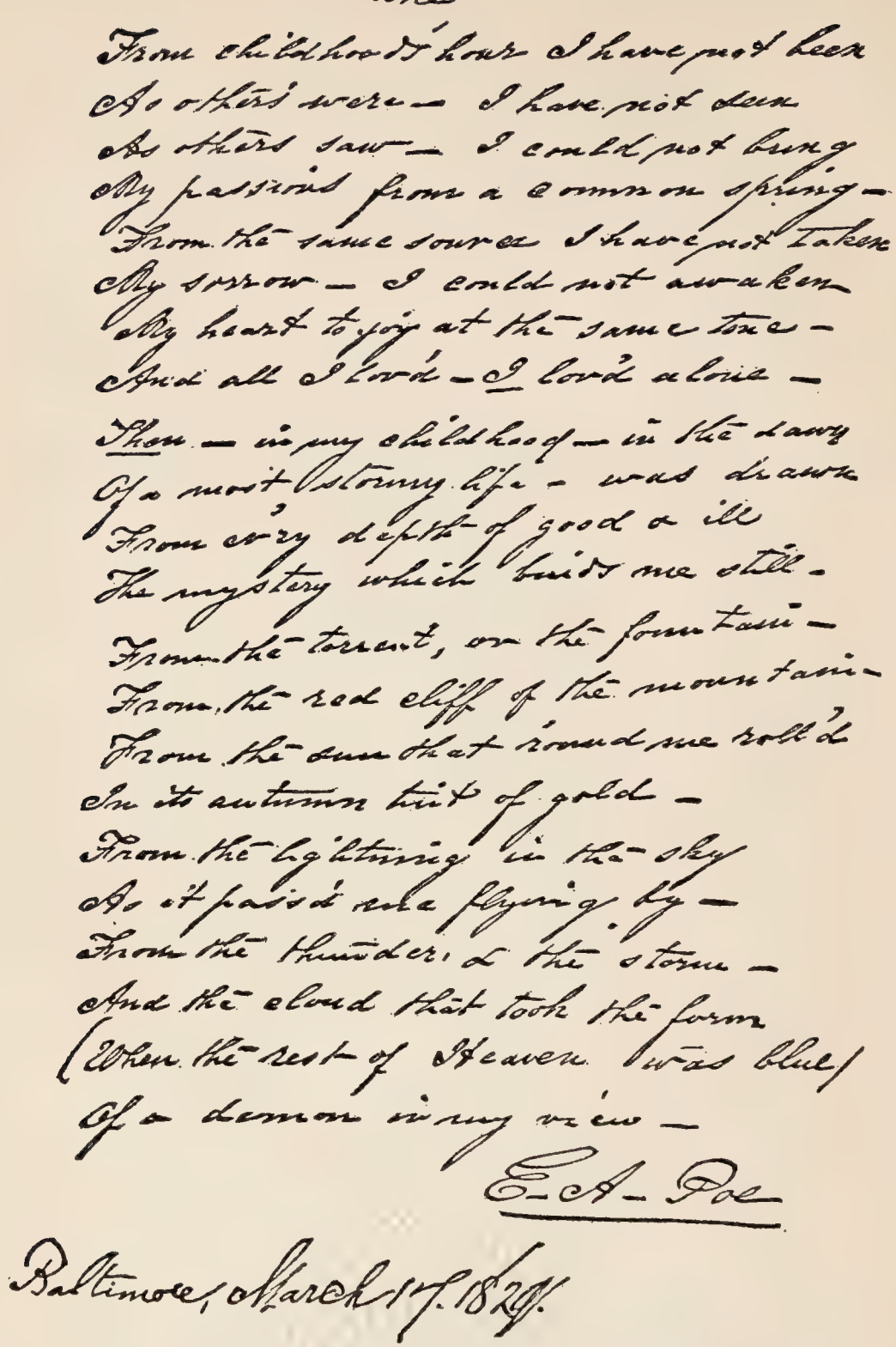
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For

Mary Lucy Allen

007546



Alone

From childhood's hour I have not been
As others were — I have not seen
As others saw — I could not bring
My passions from a common spring —
From the same source I have not taken
My sorrow — I could not awaken
My heart to joy at the same tone —
And all I loved — I loved alone —

Then — in my childhood — in the dawn
Of a most stormy life — was drawn
From every depth of good & ill
The mystery which binds me still —
From the torrent, or the fountain —
From the red cliff of the mountain —
From the sun that round me roll'd
In its autumn tint of gold —
From the lightning in the sky
As it past me flying by —
From the thunder & the storm —
And the cloud that took the form
(When the rest of Heaven was blue)
Of a demon in my view —

E. A. Poe

Baltimore, March 17. 1829.

Poe's Own Comment on His Childhood

From a poem clipped from the album of a *Mrs.* BALDERSTONE of Baltimore, by E. L. DIDIER. The date and title are in DIDIER's hand, and the date is incorrect. POE was at Fortress Monroe on March 17, 1829. The poem probably belongs to sometime later in 1829 before POE entered West Point

PREFACE

IT IS not the intention in this preface to attempt to present, in condensed form, a critical estimate of the great figure whose semblance, at least, walks through the pages of this biography. A long, laborious, and conscientious consideration of the immense amount of material concerning Poe, has convinced the author that any brief, comfortably-clever, and convenient presentation of his character, either from a literary, psychological, or romantic standpoint is bound to be misleading. So diverse, so conflicting, and so astoundingly confusing was the life experience of Edgar Allan Poe that, in comparison, the lives of many other men of letters are a simple tale.

The method followed here has been to disregard, for the most part, the findings of all other biographers who have worked in the field, and to depend totally upon source material drawn from contemporary documents, letters, and the evidence given by those who saw, talked with, and, to some extent, knew the man. No matter how great the authority, or scholarship of those who lived after Poe died, it is felt that the evidence of those who affirm, " I saw him, talked with him, on such and such an occasion he did, or said, or appeared thus and thus " — is of more value than theories, be they ever so erudite and clever.

This biography, then, is the story of Edgar Allan Poe, and the strange forgotten America in which he lived, and perished, reconstructed from the direct evidence latent in the documents, letters, books, and illustrations of the period from about 1800 to 1850. Neither expense, effort, nor meticulous care have been spared in assembling this data, in which process, the courtesy, advice, and enthusiasm of those who have

been drawn upon for aid, or for source material in their right or custody, have been truly encouraging and have, indeed, made this work possible during the past four years.

There are a great many Lives of Poe. This differs from all others in that, for the first time, it tells the complete story of the man, from birth to death, and makes reasonably clear the mystery which has hitherto surrounded the first half of his life and the formative processes of youth. Former biographers because of the inaccessibility of material, withheld, for sufficient personal reasons, have been largely compelled to project Poe as a somewhat enigmatical torso, with the base draped in convenient and impressive folds.

It is purely an accidental circumstance, but nevertheless an important one, that the passing of time has brought about the release of sources, hitherto inaccessible, which now make it possible to tell amply the strange, and startling story of Poe's youth. There is no longer any necessity for talking about " the Poe mystery," indeed, it is no exaggeration to say that there are few other literary figures whose personal life is so fully documented. There exists in the files of the firm of *Ellis & Allan,* the business house in which Poe's guardian was a partner, a surprisingly complete record of the daily life of the family, and community in which Poe lived during his youth. These papers were purchased some years ago by the Economic Section of the Library of Congress, presumably as source material for the study of an early Nineteenth Century Virginia mercantile firm. There are thousands of papers comprising the business, and personal correspondence of Poe's guardian, John Allan, and his partner, Charles Ellis, covering a quarter of a century contemporaneous with Poe's youth. During this time, Poe was in John Allan's house, or in correspondence with him. There is, in this store of material, a constant running reference to " Edgar " from childhood to manhood, a number of items in his own hand, and many letters concerning him, and his guardian.

The author and other researchers have sifted this mass of documents, and from it drawn the material for the story of Poe's childhood and youth. The story which emerged is startling, strange, and contradictory of many assertions and legends, hitherto accepted about Poe and his early environment.

For the most part, the statements made in this text are heavily documented by footnotes, but the reader is asked to remember that many assertions made in the body of the work, about the character of those who had the moulding of the young Poe in their keeping, is made from a knowledge of the complete material as a whole. To quote sources in every case would require an annex volume of references alone.

In addition to the *Ellis & Allan Papers,* the publication of the correspondence between Poe and John Allan by the Valentine Museum, in 1925, amply covered the period between 1826 and 1832. By good fortune, the author was able to locate the wills of William Galt, and John Allan, which are here published in full, in the appendix, and from a synthesis of all three sources: *Ellis & Allan,* the *Valentine Museum Letters,* and the wills mentioned, to present his conclusions. It is proper to state here that the construction put upon the relations between Poe and his guardian is not an effort to exonerate Poe. The domestic affairs of John Allan have, as a matter of fact, been treated *with considerable reserve.* There is no desire to make " startling revelations " in this biography. Collateral material, bearing upon events and persons not concerned with Poe, has been carefully excluded. It is also pertinent to state that, in the author's opinion, the attempt by John Allan to throw a shadow on the name of the poet's mother was without foundation, and a doubtful gesture of desperate self-defense.

A much closer, and more affectionate relation between Edgar Poe and his elder brother, William Henry Leonard

Poe, than has hitherto been suspected, has been brought to light by the recent discovery of Henry Poe's poems and prose bearing upon Edgar. The above-mentioned material has been generously supplemented, and made more or less complete by the letters and data supplied to the author by Edward V. Valentine, Esq., of Richmond, related to Poe's foster-mother, and one of the few persons still living, known to have seen Poe, and to have had immediate knowledge of his character, his family, and personal friends. In this matter, and in others, the author is in great debt to Mr. Valentine.

Although Poe was an extraordinary, and unique character, in attempting to reconstruct his life, it soon became apparent that, without a recall of the forgotten and swiftly changing world through which he moved amid the kaleidoscopic incidents of his environment, it would be hopeless to even approach an understanding of the man. Yet if Poe's reactions to his environment were peculiar to himself, it is in those very peculiarities that his essential literary character is to be glimpsed, and that his triumphs and failures are to be found. Because, for many intricate historical reasons, the America from 1800 to the Civil War, and, particularly, the America of the 1830's and 1840's has been allowed to lapse into oblivion, only the lyrical, and romantically-imaginative work of Poe is generally known to the present generation.

The peculiar and intense difficulties with which the writers of the " Middle American " period struggled, and to which most of them capitulated, are now much less evident, even to scholars, than the environment of Restoration London, — or almost any other era. In this study, the intellectual and physical background of the central figure has therefore been reproduced with considerable care.

America is gradually becoming aware of its past. Suddenly realizing that, for some reason, the balance of influence in the planet may have been conferred upon her, she is

now looking about and behind, and wondering why. It is ludicrous to suppose that the three generations, from the founding of the Federal Union to the Civil War, were merely so many old-fashioned nobodies. We have already begun to be intrigued by their furniture and costumes, and it is now time to commence to look beneath the surface. Whether we admire or not is inconsequential. The type of culture, which has now acquired a fearsome momentum, was then getting under way among Americans, its future direction was being settled — so that, it is now little short of a necessity to become familiar with all of this background. It seems startling, at this time, to insist that in the Baltimore, or Philadelphia, or Boston of the 1830's and 1840's, or even earlier, there were tides of thought, intellectual movements, and political theories that congealed in literature. But it was so, and, without understanding them, and resurrecting them, we cannot understand ourselves.

It is, therefore, earnestly hoped that, in this biography, the attempt to suggest some of the values of the " Middle American scene " will become evident. Poe's own comment was couched in a style and with an irony that made it distastefully, and even madly, iconoclastic, to his contemporaries. In the year 1926 a great deal of his criticism of social, political, and literary life in America rings with a strangely modern sound. It is significant that, while conservative academic circles still continue to yawn through Mr. Emerson's doubtful *Compensations,* there is no knowledge, or comment upon what Mr. Poe had to say of democracy, science, and unimaginative literature about the same time. The croak of the raven is conveniently supposed to be purely lyric. In that direction, the discussion of Poe's contribution to American letters may be said to be presented here in a modern aspect.

The contribution to imaginative literature is, always, the main, and most pertinent claim for attention that an author

can have upon posterity. Whatever may be the eventual niche accorded to Edgar Allan Poe in the literature of English, and estimates vary, the great importance of his place in the field of American letters cannot be successfully denied.

The legend of the man is enormous. One of the few American literary names that cannot be mentioned without awakening interest, anywhere in the United States, is that of Edgar Allan Poe. He is one of the few of our poets who enjoys the perquisites of completely general fame. This is, in itself, for whatever reason, a giant achievement, and deserves the attention of careful and complete biography, free from sectional propaganda, the pet theories of specialists, and sentimental, or moralistic twaddle. But there is something more than that; for those who care nothing, even for those who deprecate his contributions to literature, the story of the man, as a mere human adventure, must, by force of its inherent, dramatic, genuinely romantic, and strange psychological values, be found intriguing to the last degree. Though we may find it impossible to love, and even difficult to admire, we cannot help but be intensely interested. The bare material of the man's biography is fascinating. Its events constitute a series of human accidents out of which the *timbre* of personality, and the notes on the staff of incident, have produced the harmony and dissonance of an orchestrated tragedy. With so great a theme, the present biographer can only hope that his audience will not be repulsed by the many difficulties which, he is the first to acknowledge, he has frequently been unable to surmount.

References in the text to authorities, sources, and the author's comments, are made in a series of running footnotes numbered consecutively. Cumbersome Latin abbreviations have been left out, *and the numbers may refer to footnotes either backward or forward.* In using those references, the reader is asked to bear in mind that the footnotes run from 1 to 934, and that a reference to a note *may* also imply and

include a reference to the discussion in the text upon the same page where the footnote occurs. Duplication of footnotes, and cumbersome requoting of authorities have thus been avoided.

The illustrations, with few exceptions, notably that of Poe on Sullivan's Island, are all from contemporary sources, and have been chosen and arranged, not only to illustrate a particular place in the text, but also to make clear the background of the period in which Poe moved, and the panorama of the changes which occurred. For the convenience of Poe scholars and collectors, the title pages of Poe's *bound works,* issued during his lifetime, are here reproduced, together with the photographs of several rare newspapers, and a periodical to which he contributed. In each case, these accompany a discussion, and description of the publication in the text.

No reference in the biography is made to the " Quarles " pamphlet supposed, by some to have been issued by Poe as a reply to Dickens's *American Notes.* In the opinion of the author, based on a thorough investigation, this is not an item that can be assigned to the pen of Poe. The discussion of Poe's " war " with Longfellow, and of his association with Dr. Thomas Holley Chivers has, for reasons of space, been only indicated. A study of Chivers is much needed in the bibliography of American Literature. The relations between Edgar Allan Poe, and his older brother, Henry, have only been touched on in the text. A full discussion of the two brothers will be found in *Poe's Brother, The Poetry of William Henry Leonard Poe,* by Hervey Allen and Thomas Ollive Mabbott, Doran, 1926, an excerpt from which is here printed in Appendix IV. It should also be noted that this biography ends with the death of Poe, and does not purport to detail the aftermath of the Griswold controversy, and other posthumous matters.

In conclusion, the author desires to make evident his profound sense of gratitude, and indebtedness to the following

persons, publishers, and institutions, for their invaluable aid, and generous contributions of advice and data:

To the Edgar Allan Poe Shrine of Richmond, Virginia, and to Mr. and Mrs. Archer Jones, personally, for their invaluable assistance, access to important stories of Poe material, and for illustrations; to Granville S. Valentine, Esq., and to Miss Julia Sully, both of Richmond, Va., to W. G. Stanard, Esq., President of the Virginia Historical Association, and to Mrs. Mary Newton Stanard for several valuable facts, reminiscences, illustrations, and helpful observations; to Edward V. Valentine, Esq., for excerpts from his diary, and permission to reprint letters from the Allan-Galt correspondence; to James Southall Wilson, Edgar Allan Poe Professor of Literature at the University of Virginia — in particular for his generous attitude about the title "Israfel" — and for access to the Ingram collection, diaries, and Whitman correspondence at the University of Virginia, as well as permission to quote sundry items, and for his helpful advice; to William Van R. Whitall, Esq., of Pelham, New York, for the loan of essential texts from his library and collection, and for his advice and comment; to John T. Snyder, Esq., of Pelham, New York, for the use of rare Poe items, and first editions in his collection; to S. Foster Damon, Esq., of Harvard University, for advice and information; to a New York "Poe Collector," who desires to remain anonymous, for the loan of texts; to James F. Drake, Esq., for the loan of three letters, and permission to reprint; to Dwight Franklin, Esq., for permission to reproduce his study of the young Poe; to Miss Laura M. Bragg, Director of the Charleston Museum, and to John Bennett, Esq., for information dealing with Poe in Charleston, and *The Gold Bug;* to Theodore Spicer-Simson, Esq., — and to Miss Elena von Feld, of the American Museum of Natural History, for the illustrations of Poe's Gold Bug Synthesis; to Edwin M. Anderson, Esq., Librarian of the New York Public Library; to Francis Rawle, Esq.,

President of the Pennsylvania Historical Society; to the Librarian of the Century Association; to the Maryland Historical Society, in particular for rare files of newspapers and illustrations; to the Librarian of the Virginia State Library; and to the Custodian of the *Ellis & Allan Papers* at the Library of Congress.

The author also desires to express his appreciation for the release of copyrights on various and sundry items and illustrations to Houghton Mifflin Company, Thomas Y. Crowell and Company, Harper Brothers, the Century Company, the University of Virginia, the Columbia University Press, the Lewiston Journal Company, Charles Scribner's Sons, The Valentine Museum, of Richmond, Va., and J. B. Lippincott Company — Also to Professor George E. Woodberry, Professor James A. Harrison, Professor Killis Campbell, and Dr. Thomas Ollive Mabbott particularly, for the benefit of their labors in the Poe field, without which no competent comment on Poe would now be possible.

New York City, U. S. A.
October 1, 1926

HERVEY ALLEN

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ISRAFEL

Volume I

Israfel

CHAPTER I
A Dramatic Prologue

MRS. PHILLIPS was a milliner who lived on Main Street in Richmond, Virginia, near that part of the town known as the "Bird in Hand." In the year 1811, in addition to her usual summer creations of silk, lavender-ribbon and lace, — which were said to have occasionally attained the distinction of good taste, — she was also doing a more than usually thriving trade in perfumes and cosmetics, owing to the gathering next door at the *Indian Queen Tavern*[1] of Mr. Placide's Company of *Richmond Players* about to open the local theatrical season.

Sometime in August the personnel of Mr. Placide's troupe was further augmented by the arrival from Norfolk, where she had lately been playing, of a young actress then twenty-six years of age, Mrs. Elizabeth Arnold Poe, whose beauty, voice and terpsichorean accomplishments had made it worth while for Mr. Placide to pay her way from Norfolk to Richmond, since her failing health, the presence of two young children, and the death or absence of her husband seems to have left her stranded in the former place, despite the fact of a performance having been lately advertised there for her benefit.[2]

Mrs. David Poe, for such had been her second husband's name, was accompanied by her two children, Edgar and Rosalie,

[1] Mrs. Phillips' shop, which is still standing in an altered shape, was next door to a hostelry famous as the haunt of actors in a part of town where there were a number of inns. Among others near by, and one of the oldest, was the *Bird in Hand,* from which that portion of town took its name. Mrs. Phillips has been called "Mrs. Fipps" heretofore, but in the Richmond directories of the time she appears as "Mrs. Phillips." Fipps was evidently the Scotch equivalent adopted by tradition.

[2] Norfolk, Virginia, *Herald* for July 26, 1811. — "Misfortunes have pressed heavily upon Mrs. Poe, who has been left alone, the support of herself and several young children."

and was then, or later, given rooms in Mrs. Phillips' establishment, probably owing to the fact that the inn next door was already crowded, and that the nature of the entertainment provided there was at times too Bohemian and convival to suit the needs of a young actress in delicate health, the mother of a family.

Of the two children, Edgar was the older, then going on to three years of age. He had been born in Boston on January 19, 1809,[3] while his mother and father were playing in that city at the old Federal Street Theater. At the time of his arrival in Richmond, Edgar was a handsome, sturdy little boy with large, dark gray eyes, long, dark brown hair, and an engaging countenance. His sister Rosalie was then a child in arms, having been born most probably in December, 1810, in Norfolk, Virginia.[4] A third and eldest child, William Henry Leonard Poe, had been left shortly after his birth, in the Summer of 1807, in the care of his paternal grandfather, " General " David Poe, at 19 Camden Street, Baltimore.

Edgar Allan Poe, for that was the full name which the son of the young actress was later to receive, was the child of strolling actors, if so leisurely a word as " strolling " can be applied to the painful and varied peregrinations of his parents, David and Elizabeth.

Elizabeth Arnold (Poe), the poet's mother, was the daughter of an actor, Henry Arnold, and an actress, Elizabeth Smith, both of the Covent Garden Theater, London. The marriage bans of the couple were published at St. George's Church in London in 1784, and the couple were married in June of that year. Elizabeth, their daughter, was born in the Spring of 1787. Henry Arnold, Poe's maternal grandfather, appears to have died in the

[3] This date has been agreed upon after the careful investigations of Prof. Woodberry. All other dates, whether given by Poe himself, or the members of the Poe family, can be confidently disregarded. Poe's autobiographical notes given to Griswold on the back of an old envelope are particularly misleading. See note on Poe's parentage and heredity in Appendix I.

[4] Accounts of Rosalie Poe upon her adoption by the Mackenzies a few months later speak of her as much older and as " running about " even at the time of Mrs. Poe's arrival in Richmond.

early Winter of 1790, as his name disappears from the play bills about then. His widow continued to play at Covent Garden for the next six years, but left London at the beginning of November, 1795, for the United States, taking her daughter Elizabeth along with her. They landed in Boston from the ship "Outram" on January 3, 1796, as a shipping notice two days later in the *Massachusetts Mercury* shows. Miss Arnold was then nine years old. The passenger list of the "Outram" included a number of emigrating English actors among whom was one Charley Tubbs.

In February, 1796, with considerable success,[5] Mrs. Arnold made her American début at Boston. A little later she and her daughter, accompanied by Mr. Tubbs, after a brief tour through part of New England, arrived at Portland, Maine; where the young Miss Arnold made her first appearance (sic) at a vocal concert on June 1, 1796, singing some songs, suited to her childish age and part. It was about this time, if not earlier, that the attractive widow Mrs. Arnold became the spouse of the genial but superficial Mr. Tubbs.[6] He accompanied her upon the pianoforte and supported her in minor parts. During the Fall and Summer of 1796 they attempted to organize at Portland, Maine, what may be quaintly regarded as the first "little theater" in America.

Mr. and Mrs. Tubbs and the young Elizabeth Arnold were the stars of the company, the other members appear to have been recruited mainly from the local amateur talent. One winter's experience of the coldness of the climate and the frigid dramatic enthusiasm of the Puritans appears, however, to have been blighting, and in January, 1797, Mr. and Mrs. Tubbs together with the ten-year-old girl, "the beautiful Miss Arnold whose

[5] *Massachusetts Mercury* for February 16, 1796: "We have had the pleasure of a complete fruition in the anticipation of the satisfaction a Boston audience would receive from the dramatic abilities of Mrs. Arnold. The theater never shook with such bursts of applause, as on her first appearance, on Friday last," etc.

[6] Mr. Tubbs may have married Mrs. Arnold before they left England. The actress naturally retained her old name on theater bills and the matter is therefore difficult to trace. Woodberry is followed here. The story that Poe's mother was born at sea is a legend with no basis of fact, it may be noted.

powers as an actress command attention," [7] attached themselves to Mr. Solee's Company of *Boston and Charleston Comedians* and started for South Carolina. On the way down the coast, they stopped in New York to give two performances at the John Street Theater, when an epidemic of yellow fever intervened and the company was scattered to reunite again in Charleston, S. C. The Tubbses arrived on the sloop "Maria" and went to board with Colonel Maybery on Bay Street.

In Charleston, performances were given all winter. The season opened November 9th, 1797, and Mr. Solee engaged both Mr. and Mrs. Tubbs for light comedy parts and songs, and the young Miss Arnold in childish rôles such as "Cupid," and "a nymph." [8]

In the Spring of 1789, just before the season was over, Mr. Tubbs, together with two other actors of the company, Edgar and Whitelock, caused such disaffection in the troupe as to result in a dissension in its ranks. Some of the actors, among whom were Mr. and Mrs. Tubbs and the young Miss Arnold, were forced to leave the city temporarily. Mr. Tubbs was described by the manager, Mr. Solee, as the "least member of the company and a vermin." These disgruntled players were later gathered together again in Charleston by Mr. Edgar, and for a month after the close of the season by the Charleston Company, continued to give performances under the name of the *Charleston Comedians*.

It was in this troupe that Poe's mother, Elizabeth Arnold, ceased to take only juvenile parts and found herself described as an actress.[9] Mr. Edgar, the pseudo-manager of the new troupe, appears to have been a drunkard with a disputatious disposition. Owing to this, and the fact that the secession of his cast from the ranks of the *Charleston Players* had been viewed unfavor-

[7] The *Eastern Herald and Gazette of Maine,* December 12, 1796.

[8] Elizabeth Arnold made her début on the Charleston boards November 18, singing *The Market Lass,* and her first "important" theatrical appearance December 26, as the "Duke of York" in *Richard III.* The family continued playing in Charleston through the Spring of 1798.

[9] *South Carolina State Gazette* for April and May, 1798: Miss Arnold's new parts at this time were: "Anna" in the *Death of Major André;* "Miss Biddy Bellair" in *Miss in Her Teens;* "Nancy" in *Three Weeks after Marriage;* "Pink" in *The Young Quaker;* "Sophia" in *The Road to Ruin;* and "Phoebe" in *The Reapers.*

ably by the public and press, the notices which he and his people received were by no means favorable. To this, however, both Mrs. Tubbs and Miss Arnold were notable exceptions.

It is about this time that all references to Mr. and Mrs. Tubbs cease. They disappear from the scene; and it is quite possible that the grandmother of Edgar Allan Poe rests in some unmarked grave in Charleston, S. C., the victim of "Yellow Jack," the terrible fever, which for years haunted the old port epidemically and perennially, claiming, even a half century later, the brother of the English poet, Hugh Clough, and many another.[10] There is some tradition of Poe's grandmother having appeared later in Baltimore but it rests on a shadowy foundation. That she accompanied Mrs. Poe and the children to Richmond in 1811 has no basis of fact.

In the late Spring or early Summer of 1798, apparently without her mother or stepfather, Elizabeth Arnold in the care of a Mr. Usher[11] and a Mrs. Snoden came north to Philadelphia where they joined the dramatic company then playing in that city, and acted for the next four seasons, until 1802, with occasional appearances in Washington, Southwark, and other places.

In March, 1800, the company with which the future Mrs. Poe was then playing was joined by a Mr. C. D. Hopkins, comedian. On July 4, 1802, Miss Arnold was given a benefit performance in Baltimore, and it *may* have been at that time that she was first seen by young David Poe, then about twenty-five years old and engaged in studying law[12] with Henry Didier and others. This meeting, however, is only a possibility. David Poe

[10] Epitaph in St. Michael's Churchyard, Charleston, S. C.

GEORGE AUGUSTUS CLOUGH
A NATIVE OF LIVERPOOL,
DIED SUDDENLY OF "STRANGERS FEVER"
NOV'R 5TH 1843
AGED 22

A careful search of available records in Charleston, S. C., made by the author in 1923–4, failed, however, to reveal any trace of either Mr. or Mrs. Tubbs being interred there.

[11] The name "Usher" thus appears early in the history of Poe.

[12] He was born "certainly not later than 1780." John Poe, Esq., to Prof. Woodberry, June 19, 1883. The statement that David Poe eloped with Miss Arnold about this time as related by Ingram is not true. He was misinformed.

went south to an uncle in Augusta, Ga., and in July, 1802, Elizabeth Arnold was married to Mr. Hopkins whose principal comic rôle was that of " Tony Lumpkin." The couple continued to play in Alexandria, Norfolk, Petersburg, and Richmond [13] as members of the *Virginia Players*. Of this union there were no children.

In the meantime, young David Poe, who seems to have had more interest in amateur theatricals — where his appearance had met some encouragement — than in " Blackstone," left his uncle's house in Augusta and went to Charleston, S. C., where he made his " second appearance on any stage " December 5th, 1803.[14] Despite his desire for theatrical fame, David Poe seems to have been of a retiring and even bashful disposition. In addition, he was delicate and tubercularly inclined, which probably partly accounts for the fact of an awkwardness and self-consciousness that precluded him from success in any but the most minor rôles.[15] His amateur manner remained, and whatever his talents, it may be definitely stated that they were always far below those of the young actress whom he afterward married.[14] Nevertheless, the young actor's first press notices [16] were not unfavorable, and he seems to have met with considerable encouragement in Charleston, then one of the principal theatrical cen-

[13] The plays and the rôles in which Mr. and Mrs. Hopkins appeared can be found in the contemporary newspaper files of the towns mentioned.

[14] The *Charleston City Gazette* for December 1, 1803, advertises David Poe's first appearance in a pantomime, *La Perouse* — as " An Officer." For a full discussion of the relative dramatic abilities of both of Poe's parents, see Woodberry's *Life*, 1909, vol. I, chap. I. I have somewhat curtailed it here as being of minor importance in connection with Poe himself and have contented myself by introducing some new material not given by or accessible to former biographers.

[15] *George Barnwell* — " Young Poe begins to emerge from the abyss of embarrassment in which natural diffidence, from his first appearance until two or three of his last performances had plunged him so deep as to deprive him of all power of exertion. But he must have not only courage but patience: 'slow rises the Actor.' " Information from a contemporary dramatic criticism in a Charleston newspaper supplied by Eola Willis of Charleston, S. C.

[16] " The *Charleston Courier* at this time had an official critic, 'Thespis' — (Mr. C. C. Carpenter), a cultivated Englishman, who not only wrote dramatic criticisms of a peculiarly honest and helpful nature, but took a keen fatherly interest in the advancing careers of the young members of the company. His sympathy and understanding must have been very comforting to the tyros who were trying to prove their worth to the Manager's satisfaction." — Eola Willis in the *Bookman*.

ters, where he appeared during the entire Winter of 1803 [17] under the management of Mr. Placide of the *Charleston Players,* who had succeeded Mr. Solee.

The best portrait of Edgar Allan Poe's father that remains is to be found in the dramatic criticism of a contemporary Charleston newspaper describing his first speaking appearance: [16]

Of the Young Gentleman who made his first appearance on any stage, it would be hazardous to take an opinion from his performance this evening. For some time he was overwhelmed with the fears incident on such occasions to an excess that almost deprived him of speech. A first appearance is a circumstance of novelty, and the audience therefore did not, as the European audiences do, on such occasions, greet the newcomer with encouraging plaudits; nor did the young gentleman receive one token of welcome or approbation till it was earned by him. Though he could not, even to the last, divest himself of his fears, we thought he disclosed powers well fitted for the stage. His voice seems to be clear, melodious and variable; what its compass may be can only be shown when he acts unrestrained by timidity. His enunciation seemed to be very distinct and articulate; and his face and person are much in his favor. His size is of that pitch well fitted for general action if his talents should be suited to sock and buskin. On the whole, we think that if the young gentleman has a passion for histrionic fame he may promise himself much gratification. What he did disclose was greatly in his favor; and extreme modesty though it may operate as a temporary impediment, will be considered by every judicious person, as a strong prognostic of merit, and earnest of future excellence!

That neither the professional performance nor the type of

[17] The characters acted by David Poe at the Charleston Theater in 1803 were: "Belmore" in *Jane Shore;* "Laertes" in *Gustavus Vasa;* "Harry Thunder" in *Wild Oates;* "Donalbain" in *Macbeth;* "Grimm" in *The Robbers;* "Falliero" in *Abaellinor or the Great Bandit;* "Stepheno" in *The Tale of Mystery;* "Young Woodland" in *Cheap Living;* "Williams" in *John Bull;* "Don Pedro" in *Much Ado About Nothing;* "An Officer" in *La Perouse;* "Tressel" in *Richard III;* "Pedro" in *The Voice of Nature;* "Allan-a-Dale" in *Robin Hood;* "Thomas" in *The Marriage Promise;* "Trueman" in *George Barnwell;* "Carmillo" in *Julia or the Italian Lover;* "Trifle" in *The East Indian;* "Dennis Crackskull" in *The Scheming Lieutenant;* "Don Garcia" in *A Bold Stroke for a Husband;* "Mezetin" (Pantomime) in *The Touchstone of Truth;* "Don Antonio Gaspard" in *Liberty in Louisiana;* "Hunter" in *The Fatherless Children;* "Hortensio" in *Catherine and Petruchio;* "Sebastian" in *Charlotte and Werter;* and "Lover" in *The Old Soldier.* — Eola Willis in the *Bookman,* from files of contemporary Charleston newspapers.

plays in which David Poe acted entitled him to any claim upon "histrionic fame," both the criticism of the time and the play bills with the small parts in which he appeared confirm.[17]

In the Fall of 1804 David Poe had evidently come North, for we find him joining the *Virginia Players* in company with his future wife, and playing in Petersburg and throughout the entire circuit of that company. The season of 1805 was opened in Washington under the management of Mr. Green. It was unfortunate in several ways; financially, and from the loss of the company's star comedian, Mr. Hopkins, who died after a very brief period of illness on October the 26th. His widow, the former Miss Arnold, did not remain long unconsoled, for in a surprisingly short time afterward she was married to young David Poe, who borrowed money from a friend for the expenses of the occasion. Whether the young widow's haste was due to the natural ardor of her temperament or the failure of the deceased to engage her affections, must remain in those realms of speculation sacred to theologians.

The Poes remained with the *Virginia Players* until May, 1806, when they went North to Boston, stopping on the way for summer engagements at Philadelphia and New York. By October they had rejoined their old friends the Ushers of the *Boston and Charleston Players,* whose influence may have been responsible, together with the Poes' former appearance with the company, for their engagement at the Federal Theater in Boston.

The Poes remained in Boston for three years. Mrs. Poe played several major Shakespearean rôles from time to time, "Blanche," "Ophelia," "Cordelia," "Juliet," and occasionally "Ariel." She appeared frequently as a dancing partner with her husband, dancing the Polish Minuet or singing between his clogs, reels, hornpipes, and Scotch flings.

A digest of the criticisms which Mrs. Poe received shows her to have been more gifted with diligence in her art than by native talent, and deserving of praise rather than of admiration. David Poe found his natural level in minor parts, or in appearing as an entertainer and dancer, supported by the acceptable voice of his wife. Together they managed to make a bare living.

It was during this Boston sojourn that the two boys were born: William Henry Leonard probably sometime in the early Winter, or during the Summer of 1807,[18] as the records of Mrs. Poe's unbroken appearances preclude any other time; and Edgar in January, 1809, when Mrs. Poe was again absent from the theater from January 13 to February 8th.[19] At this time the family was living at 33 Hollis Street.

As a great deal has been made in some quarters of the fact that Poe was born in Boston and of his later brief association with the place, it must always be kept in mind that he was *born* there and nothing more. Even a genius can scarcely be expected to have memories of the first six months of his life, even though they be passed in New England. " Because kittens may be born in an oven, that does not make them loaves of bread." Edgar Allan Poe was not a Bostonian, despite the claim, largely one of sentiment and convenience, on the title page of his first book. By education, association, preference, and prejudice, Poe was a Virginian,[20] and throughout all of his wanderings Richmond was his home.

David and Elizabeth Poe continued to play in Boston after the birth of Edgar until the end of the theatrical season. How poor these actors were, is shown by the fact that three weeks after Edgar's birth his little sylph-like mother was back on the boards dancing and singing, her first appearance after the arrival of her son having taken place on February 8th, 1809, and not two days later as the newspaper notices indicate.[21] The sudden popularity

[18] Almost certainly during the early Winter of 1807 as this child, William Henry Leonard Poe, was left with his grandparents in Baltimore during the summer of 1807, the theatrical vacation. If he were born there, this might account for the story in the Poe family that Edgar had been born in Baltimore.

[19] Mrs. Poe is advertised to appear in January, 1809, on the 6, 9, 13, 20 as the " Peasant " in *The Brazen Mask,* a pantomime. Her next appearance was on February 8th. Her confinement probably took place between January 13th and February 8th, the notice for the 20th having probably been inserted some days before the event.

[20] By " Virginian " I do not mean an " American "; the distinction, which was once a real one, has since become blurred.

[21] Original playbill of the Boston Theater. *False Alarms, Brazen Mask,* Mr. and Mrs. Poe in the cast of the latter, February 8, 1809. This bill is of peculiar interest because it shows that Mrs. Poe appeared two days earlier, after Edgar's

of the boy actor, John Howard Payne, who made his first appearance in Boston in 1809, seems for a time to have threatened the Poes' livelihood. "Master Payne," however, evidently had his heart in the right place, for on April 19, the following notice appeared in a Boston newspaper:

BOSTON THEATRE

For the Benefit of Mrs. Poe

MRS. POE RESPECTFULLY INFORMS THE PUBLIC, THAT IN CONSEQUENCE OF REPEATED DISAPPOINTMENTS IN OBTAINING PLACES DURING,

Master Payne's

ENGAGEMENT, HE HAS CONSENTED TO PLAY ONE NIGHT LONGER — AT HER *Benefit*
THIS EVENING, APRIL 19TH (1809) WILL BE PRESENTED, FOR THIS NIGHT ONLY, THE CELEBRATED PLAY CALLED *Pizzaro:*
ROLLO (*First Time*) . . . *Master* PAYNE

Two nights before, Mrs. Poe had played "Ophelia" to Payne's "Hamlet." Such a concession as the benefit must have been necessary to keep the wolf away from "Ophelia's" door.

Mrs. Poe's last appearance in Boston took place at the *Exchange Coffee House* where she sang on May 16, 1809. September found the family in New York at the Park Theater, where both she and her husband played, mostly in light comedy, until July 4th, 1810. Her husband's press notices were now often unfavorable, and it is about this time that David Poe apparently disappears. He either died or deserted his wife, and there is no further authentic mention of him. The tradition is that he died of consumption. If so, the sound of the small applause which had occasionally been his must have been effectually muffled by the clods of the potters' field.

The "disappearance" of David Poe in July, 1810, dates the

birth, than the date which Prof. Woodberry records. A pathetic sidelight is that the rôle chosen for Mrs. Poe was "little more than a walking part." See note in the Catalogue of the American Art Association Inc., for Poe items in sale of April 28, 29, 1924, No. 932.

beginning of a Poe family mystery about which there has been a good deal of futile speculation. It gave rise to suspicions that later on played an important part in the life of the poor actor's famous son. According to one legend, with little basis of fact, David Poe deserted his wife for a Scotch woman and went to live with her abroad. By her he is reputed to have had a son with whom Poe is supposed to have gone to school at Irvine, Scotland, a circumstance that laid the basis for the plot of *William Wilson*. This can all be safely dismissed as imagination not to be described as pure. A more credible Richmond tradition supposes that David Poe died in Norfolk, Virginia, which one detached and untraced newspaper clipping tends to confirm, giving the date as October 19, 1810. This tradition is all very nebulous, however, and the historical record of the poet's father ends with July, 1810, in New York.

Whatever may have been the cause of David Poe's final disappearance, there was something about it that afterward caused great uneasiness to the son of the little actress. She treasured some unfortunate correspondence, almost her sole legacy to her son, Edgar, which he too cherished while he lived, but left directions that at his death it should be burned. The request was carried out by his mother-in-law and aunt, Maria Clemm. What part David Poe, the poet's father, played in this, if any, it is therefore impossible to say and useless to guess. The position of Mrs. Poe, however, is considerably clearer.

Deprived of her husband either by death or conjugal misfortune, probably the former, she left New York in the Summer of 1810 and went south to Richmond. There she was once more engaged to play on the Southern circuit, where she was already well and favorably known. She was accompanied from place to place by the child Edgar, now only two years old, but even then involved in the maze of tragedy. Edgar was already separated from his older brother by the poverty of his parents, who had been forced to leave Henry in Baltimore. Mrs. Poe had now lost her husband and was striving to support herself and her child. She must already have been far gone in tuberculosis, of which she died only a year later, yet she was forced to appear by the

dire necessity of her poverty, dancing and singing in motley, night after night. To cap the climax she was pregnant with a posthumous child. For an actress ill and without resources, a helpless woman without a husband, engaged in a profession at which the age was only too prone to point the finger of scorn, it was a dreadful and precarious plight. There can be no doubt, that even while he was learning to talk, the little Edgar was clasped, with many a dark foreboding of natural terror, to his mother's heart.

Keeping Edgar with her, Mrs. Poe continued to play in Richmond and Norfolk, although her time was approaching. While in Norfolk (at the *Forrest House* on December 20, 1810) according to the Mackenzie family Bible, Mrs. Poe gave birth to a daughter, Rosalie.

That David Poe was not with Mrs. Poe in Norfolk at this time, is shown by the fact that Rosalie's birth took place so long after the death or disappearance of her husband that doubt was afterwards thrown on the paternity of the child.[22] It is an ungrateful task thus even to touch upon the reputation of this unfortunate young actress who gave to the world what art she had, and bequeathed to her adopted country one of its greatest geniuses in the person of her son. But the facts of the situation should no longer be suppressed as they undoubtedly affected the relations of Edgar Poe with his guardian, and his own family later on. It was this story, or the echoes of it, which long afterwards caused Poe to put the deaths of his father and mother " within a few weeks " of each other.[23]

All the authentic dates and the known facts show that the suspicion which was thus afterward thrown upon the memory

[22] See the letter from John Allan to William Henry Leonard Poe in Baltimore, dated Richmond, November 1, 1824, in which among other things he says: . . . " At least she is half your sister and God forbid, my dear Henry, that we should visit upon the living the errors and frailties of the dead." This letter is to be found in the *Ellis & Allan Papers* in the Library of Congress, photostat in the possession of the author. For a full discussion of this see page 125.

[23] Poe's own statement (Poe to William Poe, Richmond, August 20, 1835) that " my father David died when I was in the second year of my age . . . my mother died a few weeks before him," is of a piece with the rest of his muddled autobiographical data and shows that he was either ignorant of the facts (sic), or rightly anxious to shield the reputation of his mother and sister.

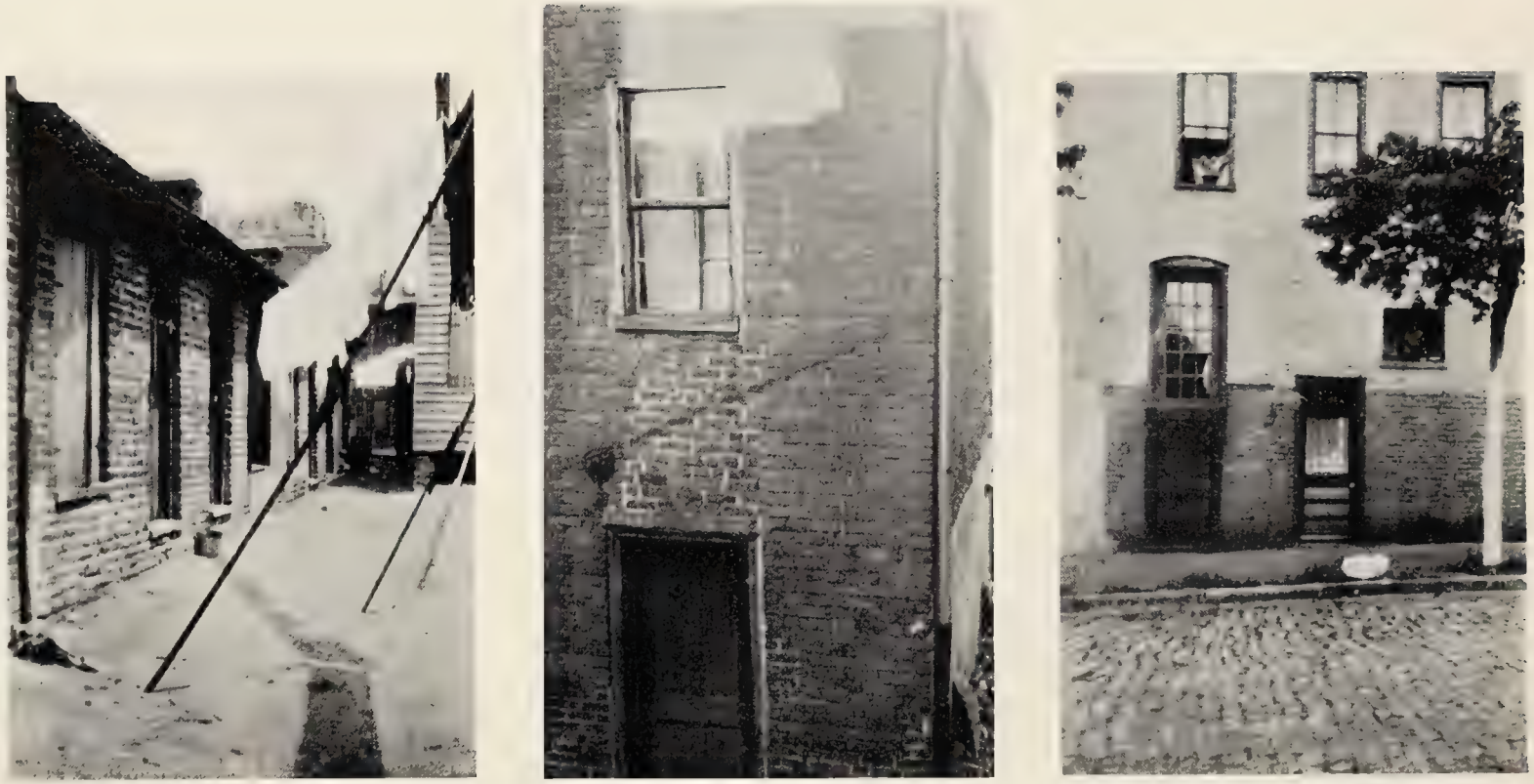


Mrs. David Poe

née Arnold

who died in Richmond, Va., December the eighth
1811, leaving her son EDGAR POE an infant orphan

From a miniature long cherished by Poe



The House in which *Mrs.* David Poe died in Richmond, Virginia

First located by Mr. J. H. Whitty

Views from left to right show: 1. Rear Court, 2. Mrs. Phillip's House,
3. Bricked-up arch to old "Indian Queen Tavern"

Courtesy of the Edgar Allan Poe Shrine, Richmond, Virginia

of Mrs. Poe was not only cruel but untrue. That it was thrown upon her, however, there is no doubt. With the use that was made of it, and its effect upon the character of her son Edgar, it will be necessary to deal.

Soon after the birth of Rosalie, Mrs. Poe was again appearing in various parts, continuing a now hopeless struggle to support herself and her two " infants " despite her now fast-failing health. The earnings of a minor actress on the early American stage were at best pitiable, and all the incidents of the life were ignoble, squalid, and precarious. The hardships of travel were great, and the places of entertainment rarely comfortable and not always respectable. For a sensitive woman with two babies to care for, it was a difficult and exhausting mode of life. Mrs. Poe's misfortunes and condition were evidently the cause of solicitude to her fellow actors, as frequent appeals for herself and her fatherless children in the columns of old newspapers still meet the curious eye. In Charleston, Norfolk, and Richmond, she was accorded frequent benefits at which the charitable public was urged to assist.

From Norfolk Mrs. Poe went to Charleston, S. C., where she played in the Winter and Spring of 1810 and 1811. In April of the latter year her health was evidently failing, for she was given a special benefit performance. In the notice of this, which appeared in the Charleston papers, her ill health was specifically mentioned. From Charleston the young actress and her family returned to Norfolk, where she was apparently in failing health and destitute.[24] The article about her there is lengthy and appealing, and stresses the point that she " has been left alone, the support of herself and several children." Evidently the response was not great, and in August we find her again returning to Richmond, where she was always most popular, in time for the opening of the season.

It was to be the last of her many weary journeys with her young and doubtless often fretful family. Her little space of comedy was about to end in a tragedy, one of many which pur-

24 Norfolk, Virginia, *Herald* for July 26, 1811.

sued her son Edgar through the remainder of his astonishing life. As she drove through the brick arch [25] into the wagon yard of the old *Indian Queen Tavern* and ensconced herself in the rooms behind and over the milliner shop of the good Mrs. Phillips, she had entered upon the last scene of the last act. Perhaps in her heart she knew it, for she had already been very ill and must have been, from the nature of the events which were soon to follow, in a consumptive condition and a low state of health.

For an account of Mrs. Poe in the heyday of her fame, we have the description of one who had seen her as a care-free girl.[26] Although the description is evidently taken from the miniature of Mrs. Poe which Edgar long cherished, a copy of which was sent to Ingram, Poe's first competent biographer after Poe's death; [27] it, and the miniature itself, are the best memorials of the poet's mother which exist. This description shows Mrs. Poe to have had

> the childish figure, the great, wide open, mysterious eyes, the abundant curling hair confined in the quaint bonnet of a hundred years ago and shadowing the brow in raven masses, the high waist and attenuated arms clasped in an Empire robe of faint, flowered design, the tiny but rounded neck and shoulders, the head proudly erect. It is the face of an elf, a sprite, an Undine who was to be the mother of the most elfish, the most unearthly of poets, whose luminous dark gray eyes had a glint of the supernatural in them and reflected as he says in one of his earlier poems, " the wilder'd " nature of the man.

Such was the charming young actress who, with her attractive little boy Edgar, and her baby daughter Rosalie, took up her abode with Mrs. Phillips, the milliner at Richmond, sometime in August, 1811, " above that part of the town known as the 'Bird in Hand.' " For the mother of Israfel it was the next to the last remove.

[25] Since bricked up but still visible.

[26] Beverly Tucker, a contributor to the *Southern Literary Messenger,* and the author of *The Partizan Leader.* The description was written in 1835.

[27] The *Ingram Papers* and Manuscript in possession of the University of Virginia Library.

CHAPTER II
The Two Orphans

THE arrival of Mrs. Poe at the *Indian Queen Tavern,* as the star of the little troupe of actors then gathered there, was no doubt the signal for a good deal of comment in local dramatic circles. Rehearsals and performances soon began.

Mrs. Phillips' little shop at that time stood some little distance back from Main Street, abutting the purlieus of the Tavern on the corner of Main and Twenty-third. There was a neat walk up through the dooryard, then lined with shade trees under which the young child Edgar immediately after his arrival in Richmond must first have played.[28]

According to the testimony of a lady from Norfolk[29] who, as a little girl, remembered seeing Mrs. Poe play there in 1811, and made friends with her children who lodged nearby on Bermuda Street (at Norfolk), — the family was then accompanied by a Welsh nurse who looked after the children and nursed Mrs. Poe. This evidence is extremely legendary, however, and there is no authentic mention whatever of the nurse's presence in Richmond.[30]

[28] For the description of the house in which Mrs. Poe died and its environs, I am indebted to information supplied me by the present owner of the property in whose family it has been for many years, and under whose hands it has passed through successive building changes greatly altering it and the old inn next door, both belonging to the same owner. A personal visit was made to the spot, and photographs of the premises made and compared with old ones, in July, 1925. The former house of Mrs. Phillips is now inhabited by negroes and surrounded by a tenement, all in a shocking state of neglect and disrepair. The former front yard of her shop is occupied by a building erected some time since. The inn archway is bricked up.

[29] Afterwards a Mrs. Archer of Richmond, mother of Mrs. S. A. Weiss.

[30] Although there is some doubt about this "nurse" having been with Mrs. Poe, the evidence from this account and several others is too precise to be *ignored.* I am inclined to accept it as accounting for the persistent rumors that Mrs. Tubbs, for whom the nurse was mistaken, accompanied Mrs. Poe to Richmond.

Mrs. Poe's bright little lad would no doubt have been a favorite with the members of the *Virginia Players* and the hangers-on about the *Indian Queen* next door, and he must often have sat on the knees of his father's and mother's friends before the great open chimney of the inn. The hostelry was the center of the professional dramatic life of old "Richmond City" and was also frequented by the hangers-on and stage-door Lotharios of the theater, together with a few teamsters and travelers. But its principal business was that of a theatrical lodging house and its coterie.

Mrs. Poe, who was in increasing ill health, as the frequent interruptions of her appearances at the theater showed, must have been glad to have had the children taken care of by anyone who would do so. Often enough, perhaps, there was no one at all. Mrs. Phillips, who appears to have been a kind woman, had probably taken the burden of the two little ones and the partial care of their sick mother upon herself — as any good woman would — between the intervals of waiting upon her customers in the little front room with a low fireplace and small square window panes, where her scanty stock of ribbons, poke bonnets, lace caps, cosmetics and perfumes was on display.

Mrs. Phillips' clientele was of two strata: that of the fashionable ladies of Richmond who looked to her for the latest creations, and the dramatically inclined persons from the theatrical hotel next door, who, no doubt, found upon her counters the faultlessly blooming roses which have always enhanced the cheeks of "the profession" both on and off the stage.

Thus there was ample opportunity for the ladies of the better families of Richmond, who would not otherwise in those days have been introduced to members of the theatrical profession off-stage, to become acquainted with the fact that a young actress, the mother of the handsome little fellow playing about the door-yard, was ill in the rooms immediately behind the shop of Mrs. Phillips. There can be no doubt either, that Mrs. Poe, as the star of Mr. Placide's company, the mother of a family, and an actress who, by repute and appearance, was well known to all of fashionable Richmond, was held in a different estimate than some of her more humble sisters in the theatrical boarding house

next door. These, too, however, were occasionally honored by fashionable visitors who desired to testify to their admiration in a more ardent manner than a discreet applause from a seat in the theater might express. And among the most gay and ardent, if contemporary accounts are to be credited, none were more so than the members of a numerous circle of prosperous and pious Scotch merchants.

The theater in which Mrs. Poe and Mr. Placide's Company of *Virginia Players* acted stood on the present site of the Monumental Episcopal Church, on the block between Twelfth and Fourteenth Streets on Broad, known at the time as Theater Square.[31] In order to reach this from the lower part of Main Street where Mrs. Poe lived, it would have been most convenient to pass along Fourteenth Street to Broad.

At the corner of Fourteenth Street and Tobacco Alley was the residence of Mr. John Allan, the junior partner of *Ellis & Allan,* Scotch merchants doing a general merchandising business in the city and the region about, and trading by chartered ships and by cargo at home and abroad. The store was not under the residence, as has heretofore always been asserted, but was around the corner on Thirteenth Street about a block away on premises which were leased by the firm and purchased later on [32] in April, 1812.

During the late Summer and the Fall of 1811, Mrs. Poe must

[31] The Richmond Theater was on the site of a frame building which had been built by a remarkable Frenchman in 1786 as an Academy in which he attempted to introduce many new ideas in education and the fine arts into America. Among other things, theatricals, painting, and sculpture. The first classic plaster casts for models even seen in America were shown here. M. Quesnay's scheme failed. The Academy was afterwards used for the Virginia Convention which ratified the Federal Constitution, and in 1802, the building having been destroyed by fire, its site was occupied by the new Richmond Theater, a brick and frame structure also destroyed by fire in 1811. As many of Poe's earliest and most intimate associations are connected with this spot it has been thought worth while to give the above facts.

[32] *Ellis & Allan Papers,* Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.—Articles of agreement made and entered into the 22nd day of April in the year of our Lord 1812, between Anthony R. Thornton of the Town of Fredericksburg and State of Virginia, of the first part and Charles Ellis and John Allan, Merchants and partners trading under the name of *Ellis & Allan.* (Consideration one thousand pounds of current money on or before the 22nd day of April, 1817, with interest). To sell and convey to the said *Ellis & Allan* a house on Thirteenth Street, etc.

have often passed the house of John Allan, probably upon occasions taking little Edgar with her to performances or rehearsals at the theater. It is quite possible that Edgar may have sometimes appeared on the stage in an infantile rôle; [33] his juvenile repertoire of poems and recitations was known to have caused comment upon private occasions a little later. That he must have gone to and fro with his mother, past the door of John Allan, there can be little doubt.

Mrs. Frances Keeling Allan, the first wife of the merchant, had at this time been married to him for eight years, but was without children and undoubtedly longed for them with all the yearning of her sex and the tenderest desires of a noble but lonely and disappointed heart. The household consisted of John Allan himself, his wife Frances, her sister Anne Moore Valentine, and the negro servants or slaves. It is probable that either or both the ladies may have made the acquaintance of Mrs. Poe and her handsome boy, by whom Mrs. Allan was greatly attracted, as they passed the door from time to time, while a speaking acquaintance was struck up with the popular young actress and Edgar was offered apples,[34] a fruit as much prized then in Southern towns as oranges were in the North, one with which the Allan house was always well supplied.[35] Whether it was in this way, or at the shop of the milliner, Mrs. Phillips, certain it is that Frances, wife of John Allan, merchant, became acquainted with and more than casually interested in the fate and fortunes of Elizabeth Poe and her fatherless children. Through Mrs. Allan, too, doubtless came the interest and help of Mrs. William Mackenzie, a charitable and motherly woman, the wife of one of Mr. Allan's closest friends, already provided with two children of her own, John and Mary. It was, indeed,

[33] Edward V. Valentine to the author at Richmond, Virginia, July, 1925.

[34] Frances Allan seems to have been the *active* factor in Edgar's "adoption" from the first.

[35] John Allan to Charles Ellis in New London, Connecticut, from Richmond, Virginia, October 26th, 1812.

"P. S. I wish you would procure for me a barrel of nice green pippins on your return to New York." For this and similar items see the *Ellis & Allan Correspondence,* Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.



Frances Keeling Allan

née Valentine

First Wife of JOHN ALLAN, merchant, of Richmond, Virginia, Beloved foster-mother of EDGAR ALLAN POE

Born February 14, 1784; adopted by JOHN Dixon, printer, January 12, 1795; married JOHN ALLAN 1803; died February 28, 1829

[*Data courtesy of Edward F. Valentine*]

From a portrait by Thomas Sully, owned by Edward V. Valentine

Courtesy of the Valentine Museum, Richmond, Virginia



The Richmond of Poe's Early Childhood

From a rare old print

Courtesy of the Edgar Allan Poe Shrine, Richmond, Virginia

for both Mrs. Poe and her children, a benign combination of circumstances, whatever they may have been, which brought these two good women to her bedside in the house of the little Scotch milliner.

The Scotch circle in "Richmond City" was at that time a peculiarly close one. One of the Mackenzies afterwards remarked that "Mrs. Phillips came of a good family," [36] and doubtless both the kind ladies who had taken an interest in the young actress were provided with news as to Mrs. Poe's condition, and in return provided for her the necessities of life in the form of occasional gifts of food and clothing.

During the late Fall of 1811 Mrs. Poe's condition grew rapidly worse. The burden of supporting her two infant children must have fallen with crushing weight upon her narrow and consumptive shoulders. Her appearances at the theater grew fewer and farther apart; they finally ceased. Mr. Placide, the manager, doubtless did what he could for so important a member of his company, because all of these actors lived from hand to mouth. Mrs. Phillips must soon have been contributing the room rent free, as Mrs. Poe's stipend ceased with her appearances; and doubtless Edgar was very much about the shop, much to the good woman's terror for her poke bonnets and falderals, whose rigid repose upon uprights would have been grievously disturbed by the play of a vigorous three year old lad.

The rooms behind Mrs. Phillips' shop were not the best place in the world for an invalid. There was one fireplace downstairs, but whether there was any fuel to burn there, is another question. The lower part of Main Street, a few blocks away, was subject to periodical invasions of the River James which took every occasion to overflow its banks. The season had been an exceptionally rainy and unhealthful one throughout tide-water Virginia, as the letters of that date show; mosquitoes must have been rife,[37]

[36] Meaning a good "Scotch" family.

[37] Letter from Pedlar Mills, Virginia, from Joshua L. Ellis to Mr. Charles Ellis at Richmond, August 13th, 1811, and others of like import at later dates. "The rains have been greater here than I have ever seen them." *Ellis & Allan Papers,* Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.

and this had added constantly recurring attacks of malaria to her poverty and deprivations, to further deplete the ebbing strength of the consumptive young actress.

The little upstairs room in which she lay dying had the scantiest of furnishings: a miserable bed for herself on a straw mattress,[38] with perhaps a woven coverlet and a blanket contributed by Mrs. Phillips; one or two old chairs; probably a trundle bed for the children, or a cot upon which a nurse, if present, slept; and some bottles with candle ends in them. Mrs. Poe's effects would have been of the most meager description. A few soiled odds and ends of dramatic costumes, tawdry splendors of her past triumphs; a small trunk or chest in which some relics and letters of the vanished Harlequin were cherished by his widowed Columbine; the scanty remnants of even scantier meals; and the children's tattered clothes. In such a room lay dying the mother of Edgar Allan Poe.

In her poverty-stricken condition medical attendance must have been nil, probably luckily for her, as the science had not yet passed beyond regarding the lancet and the barbers' bowl as the panacea for all ills. She must have lain through the shortening days, as November waned into December, striving to read the darkness of the future, which for her was dark enough, trying to still the noisy and peevish crying of little Rosalie, listening to the voices of Mrs. Phillips' customers in the room below, or to the feet of her little son as they stumbled up the narrow stairs.

Her hopeless darkness, however, was lightened from time to time by visits to the squalid, but interesting garret of the dying actress and her charming children, by the *grandes dames* and lesser ladies of Richmond, who sought the latest mode in bonnets at the hands of Mrs. Phillips. She, indeed, poor woman, we may be sure, had done her full part to interest her customers in the misery of her guests, and had received perhaps an unexpected reward at finding her little shop the center of considerable interest, not all of which could have been in vain.

Those who care to search the Richmond papers of that time will find in the *Enquirer* of November 25th, 1811, an appeal for

[38] This is specifically mentioned in some accounts.

Mrs. Poe " to the kind hearted of the city," inserted no doubt by the thoughtful hands of Manager Placide, for four days later one comes across the advertisement of a benefit to be repeated for the *second* time, " in consequence of the serious and long continued indisposition of Mrs. Poe, and in compliance with the advice and solicitation of many of the most respectable families."

Among the " ladies of the most respectable families " who visited Mrs. Poe and her children, as her tragedy neared the end of its last act, none were more welcome and efficacious to the little family in the dingy upstairs room than Mrs. Frances Allan and Mrs. William Mackenzie.

It is not hard to imagine what must have been the thoughts and emotions of Mrs. Allan, the tenderly inclined, childless woman, as she sat in that bare garret with the handsome, curly-headed young Edgar Poe in her yearning arms, talking to him; and with the girlish mother on the bed, against whose soiled pillows the black hair of the invalid lay tangled in dark disarray. Nor could she have been oblivious to the silent appeal of the haunted, " wildered " eyes of the young actress which shifted tragically from the baby face of young Rosalie, resting trustfully against the bosom of Mrs. Mackenzie, to that of her little son smiling sadly back at her from the chair of Mrs. Allan. There was a silent appeal there which even a rough man might understand. To these good women, as the future proved, it was not made in vain. A few days later there was an appeal of a more obvious kind —

☞ TO THE HUMANE HEART

On this night *Mrs. Poe.* lingering
on the bed of disease and surrounded
by her children, asks your assistance:
and *asks it perhaps for the last time.*
For particulars, see the Bills of the day.

It was, indeed, " for the last time! " [39] Azrael had appeared in one of his favorite disguises, pneumonia: and the tragedies

[39] Mrs. Elizabeth Arnold (David) Poe died December 8, 1811. On December 9th Mrs. Mackenzie took Rosalie home, and Mrs. Allan carried Edgar to her house. (Statement by Mary Mackenzie, Rosalie's foster-sister.)

In the newspaper notice quoted on this page there was an error in spelling which has not been reproduced.

of the little doll actress were over. " Ariel " had received release; the tinsel stars of the wand were laid away with the paper flowers of " Ophelia "; " Juliet " was tricked out in her best paste jewels, and, for a few hours, lay in squalid state in the milliner's attic, where all those who had made her small world, and who had cared a little, might come to see. Among these, we may be sure, were the members of Mr. Placide's company from the tavern next door, Mrs. Phillips, Mrs. Allan and Mrs. Mackenzie and their husbands, who by this time had been interested in the startling little tragedy on lower Main Street to the extent of taking the arrangements for the funeral into their own hands.

It would be easy enough to pull out the *vox humana* for the final scene when Edgar and Rosalie Poe were at last parted from that which had been their mother. For the not unimaginative the facts will suffice: Mrs. Allan and Mrs. Mackenzie came for the children the morning after their mother's death. One can imagine the sudden hush about the old inn and the milliner's shop. The broad Scotch lamentations of Mrs. Phillips, the moment when the two children were held up to look for the last time upon their little doll-like mother, now waxen, indeed, and lying upon the bed, dressed in some high-waisted Empire slip of the period. Certainly, as the custom then was, some toll was taken of her long, dark locks, and before the children left the room little Rosalie was given an empty jewel case, the modest contents of which had long ago vanished to put food in her mouth. For Edgar there was a miniature of his mother, and a painting by her of Boston Harbor, upon the back of which in her own pitiful cipher she had charged her little son to " love Boston, the place of his birth, and where his mother found her best and most sympathetic friends." [40] Like many another death-bed admonition it was to be in vain, for her son always found there the reverse of his mother's experience. This, together with a certain weakness of constitution, was the entire inheritance of the orphans of David and Elizabeth Poe.[41]

[40] Woodberry, 1909, vol. I, page 14, and other authorities. Ingram I, 6, etc.

[41] There was also a bundle of letters, and as it now appears from a poem by Henry Poe recently discovered, a pocket book with locks of hair of both parents. See *Poe's Brother,* Doran, 1926.

Outside the little shop some of the members of Mr. Placide's company doubtless gathered to say, on the part of the women at least, a tearful farewell to the little grey-eyed boy who had been their pet. Some of them may have accompanied Mrs. Poe to her last resting place in St. John's Churchyard where Mr. Allan and Mr. Mackenzie, who were members of the congregation, had arranged for her burial, not without protest from certain members of the vestry who shared the prejudices of their time and were reluctant to see even the mortal remains of an actress sheltered by consecrated ground. Fittingly enough she was buried " close to the wall." There is an entry for the burial, but it is without name, and the grave was, and is at this writing, unmarked.[42]

Young as he was, Edgar Poe could scarcely have remembered the actual scenes surrounding the final tragedy of his young mother, but even a child of three may be conscious at the time that its own familiar little world has suddenly gone to pieces about it. When Edgar got to the street in front of Mrs. Phillips' shop he was parted from his baby sister, Rosalie, and suddenly found himself alone with an affectionate but nevertheless strange woman. The soft and always comforting presence known to all children as " mamma " had disappeared. The doubtless protesting sister Rosalie had mysteriously vanished in the arms of another unknown person. As the boy rattled over the old, cobbled streets of " Richmond City " in Mrs. Allan's hired hack [43] he must dimly have experienced for the first time, in an emotion without words, the extreme sense of fear and utter loneliness which was to follow him to the grave. The tenderness of the strange woman who sat beside him could never supply the intimate sense of well being and spiritual safety which a real mother confers naturally upon her child. Ishmael was gone forth to dwell in other tents, and the hand of the stranger was henceforth mysteriously against him.

[42] August, 1925.

[43] John Allan did not at this time own a horse and carriage, but he was at considerable expense for hack hire. For the frequent bills from Richard E. Wortham & Co., for hack hire through 1811 and 1812, see the *Ellis & Allan Papers,* Library of Congress, Washington, D. C. Receipt for 12th of November, 1812, etc.

Looking back after more than a hundred years, to us, the bitter end of the little tragic-comedy of Mrs. Poe seems to be one of those petty victories of which even Death might be ashamed. To young Israfel, whose trembling little mouth was for the time being stopped by the bread and kisses of charity, it was the first and perhaps the most decisive of the many tragedies which the Dark Angel Azrael was bidden to confer.

CHAPTER III
Lady Bountiful Claims Israfel

THE household in which the orphan child Edgar found himself ensconced, if not entirely welcome, was as we have seen, that of John Allan, the merchant, and Frances Keeling[44] his wife, a charming young woman then twenty-five years old. With them at this time and for many years thereafter lived Mrs. Allan's elder sister Anne Moore Valentine, soon to become known to Edgar as " Aunt Nancy," a lady whose affection, like that of her married sister, never failed to follow Edgar Poe till death stilled her loyal heart.

The house at the corner of Fourteenth Street and Tobacco Alley was neither " one of a row of dingy three story dwellings " nor a " princely Southern Mansion," as it has been variously described, but a well built, rather spacious brick structure of the Georgian type with three floors containing three or four rooms each, and a garret which at that time had a small hall and two rooms. In the rear there was probably provision for the housing of the servants, of which at this time Mr. Allan is known to have kept three and possibly more,[45] not at all unusual in slave times, nor indicative of wealth. Either upon the first or second floor, there was a large dining room with folding doors that opened into a drawing room or library, which in all probability did not contain many books, as the owner was of a practical cast of mind. Most of the rooms contained open fireplaces which at one time must have possessed handsome Georgian mantel-

[44] Frances Keeling (Valentine) Allan born 1786, her sister Anne Moore Valentine was born the previous year.

[45] I find record of this transaction in the *Ellis & Allan Papers:* " Jan. 1st, 1811, a negro woman named Judith hired from Master Cheatham for the sum of £25 to be retained clothed as usual under a bond of £50." Judith was retained for some years. See also J. H. Whitty *Memoir — The Complete Poems of Edgar Allan Poe,* large edition, note page XXII for the names of the servants some years later. Also will of William Galt, Appendix III.

pieces to match the style of the finely turned mahogany banisters with delicate uprights that still remain.[46] It was in short an excellently comfortable though not pretentious nor impressive dwelling. The house was then owned by William Galt.

As the long residence, cherishing, breeding, and education received in the home of John Allan is perhaps the central fact in Poe's story, since the vital formative years of his life were largely spent there, and since the relations between Poe and his foster-father were in a sense decisive as to the poet's future, it is the purpose here to discuss the character and affairs of John Allan and his family relations at some length and with a considerable degree of candor.[47]

Almost a century and a quarter have elapsed since the events and the persons involved in them troubled the world of men, and it is now high time to set forth the facts. That the reputations of those involved have all been carefully shielded, except the great name which has caused their several obscurities to be remembered, is already a smoking sacrifice to family pride.

John Allan was a native of Irvine, Scotland, where he had been born in 1780 and received at least an ordinary but sufficient education, of which he states, that at the age of fifteen his foster-son Edgar had already received a better one.[48] Whatever formal

[46] The author visited this house in July, 1925, and found the lower story still occupied as an office. The house has passed through many vicissitudes having at one time been the most notorious in Richmond. The partitions have been torn out to make storage space, but their location can still be seen as well as one old mantelpiece, the rest of which have been replaced by Victorian marble insults. Viewed from the front, a very deceptive idea of the size of the place is given, as it is in reality quite large. A great many of the absurdities in some of Poe's biographies could have been avoided by a visit to the houses where he and his friends lived, many of which are still standing in Richmond and elsewhere.

[47] The relative importance of the time spent in Mr. Allan's house by Poe can probably be brought home most vividly in a graphic form. Representing the whole of Poe's life by a straight line, the time spent with Mr. Allan and his family is shown by the heavier portion. The influences, of course, extended much further. The scale is one inch to each decade of Poe's life.



[48] Letter to William Henry Leonard Poe from John Allan, dated Richmond, November 1, 1824.



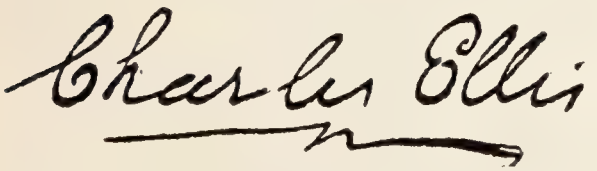
John Allan, Merchant

The foster-father of Edgar Allan Poe

Born at Irvine, Ayrshire, Scotland, in 1780, died at Richmond, Virginia, March 27, 1834

From a silhouette





Signatures of the partners

education he had was considerably augmented by a gift of keen natural parts and a mercantile familiarity with the forms of business correspondence, legal papers and accounts. His letters are couched in a style which stamp their writer as a man of decided and astute personality, not without a pleasant and softer gleam here and there, but only too often with the glitter of steel and an affected piety. In early youth he had been left an orphan [49] and emigrated from Scotland to settle in Richmond, having been brought up in the store, counting house, and ships of his uncle, William Galt, a rich Scotchman doing a prosperous mercantile and tobacco trade at home and overseas, — said to have accumulated before his death one of the largest fortunes in Virginia. Mr. Galt's generosity and native clannishness were the mainstay, the hope, and the means of final gratification of a host of squabbling, poor Scotch relatives. [50]

On a stool in the same counting house, where he had been brought up with John Allan, was another young Scotchman, Mr. Charles Ellis, also provided with previously settled relatives who were already trading to some advantage. After having served for some time about Mr. Galt's establishment, the two young clerks set up for themselves as partners in a general mercantile and trading business by sea and land, in which tobacco buying and selling was the most profitable transaction. They were in all probability backed by William Galt and Josiah Ellis, their two uncles respectively, either by a capital stock or an advance of credit sufficient to set up the new firm which traded under the name of *Ellis & Allan*. In the meantime both the young partners had married.

The nature of the trade carried on by the firm of *Ellis & Allan,*

[49] The Allans and Galts were petty traders and smugglers about the ports of Greenock and Irvine toward the end of the 18th century. John Allan's mother, whom one of the Galt cousins, once hoped to marry, kept a tea shop in Greenock. For the life of the place and time, including characters from the Allan and Galt families, see the works of the Scotch novelist, John Galt, the friend of Byron, also see Chapter V, note 126.

[50] For the statements made in this and the next paragraphs I am indebted to the correspondence between John Allan, and his sisters and brother-in-law in Scotland anent family affairs in general, Mr. William Galt of Richmond, and the troubles arising about his will. All in the *Ellis & Allan Files* at the Library of Congress.

the aroma and atmosphere of it, which literally and figuratively permeated and dominated the household and the environment in which Poe spent his boyhood, is not well described by the term " Tobacco Merchants." The firm dealt in everything under the sun, and would do or perform anything which was probably profitable and ostensibly lawful. Peace could not satiate nor did war abate the infinite variety of their correspondence and their ways of gathering pence.[51]

Shortly before the outbreak of hostilities between Great Britain and the United States we find Mr. Charles Ellis dashing off in great trepidation to New London, Connecticut, and later on beseeching Mr. James Pleasants [52] in the Hall of Congress to aid in liberating the good ship " Georgiana," which had sailed a little too close-hauled into the weather eye of the embargo law, nor did the commencement and duration of hostilities apparently cause any cessation in the correspondence with the British and foreign merchants, or with Mr. Allan's family in Scotland. Some means were found, by cartel or privateer, and the letters slipped through.[53]

In addition to the great item of tobacco (in which most of the imported merchandise purchased from the firm by Virginians was paid for in kind) the partners dealt in wheat, hay, maize, corn meal, grains, fine teas and coffees, cloth, clothing of all kinds, flowered vest stuffs, seeds, wines and liquors (especially Philadelphia claret); outfitted slaves; supplied plantations with agricultural implements, nails and hardware; chartered ships and

[51] One of the ten thousand various items in the *Ellis & Allan Papers:*

Messrs. Ellis and Allan — *Powhattan,* Jan. 6th, 1811

This will be handed you by my son John E. Meade who wants a few articles of clothing. Will you be so good as to furnish him on my acct, and oblige yours respectfully,

D. Meade

[52] Afterwards governor of Virginia.

[53] The correspondence of the firm is interesting from the standpoint of showing that the merchants on both sides of the water regarded the War of 1812 purely as a quarrel between two governments and as an unmitigated nuisance. In particular the Regent (George IV) comes off rather roughly in the candid opinions exchanged.



An Off-Hour at *Ellis & Allan*

From an old print of a contemporary establishment

coastwise schooners; imported tombstones,[54] — and, as a side issue, were not above trading in horses, Kentucky swine from the settlements, and old slaves which they hired out at the coal pits till they died.[55] The concern also advanced money; dabbled occasionally in city real estate; and both of the partners or their families had plantations in the country, John Allan's at "Lower Byrd's" and the Ellises' at "Red Hill" and "Pedlar's Mills." These also were expected to pay. It was on the whole a thrifty, a Scotch, and sometimes a sordid atmosphere in which Charles Ellis and his partner moved.[56] But for all that it was not a narrow, and never a stingy one, until years later when it might have been more generous still.

For over it all was the variety and the romance of the sea that floated up the James to the thriving port at the Falls, the long splendor of Virginia sunshine, the syrupy perfume of tobacco, and the almost magic life of old Richmond. About the warehouse and docks of Poe's foster-father crowded the foreign and coastwise shipping of square-rigged days.[57] Martingales sprang away from the proud double curve of mirrored bows, brass glittered, sails flapped, and the bo'suns' whistles sang like frantic canaries. Drays laden with great tuns of fragrant Virginia leaf rattled over the cobbles. Dark stevedores answered the hails and songs of passing barges and canal boats; and the yellow river stuttered and clucked, as the siphon of the tides rolled it backward and forward under the piles and slivered planks.

At the store, planters rode up and tethered their horses; wagons loaded for the western settlements with blankets, ging-

[54] These for Charlottesville seemed to have always had the names and dates wrong, doubtless to the present confusion of antiquaries. The New England stonecutters evidently had little reverence for Virginia families.

[55] Memorandum marked "Old Papers 1811– 1812."
"In re. McCaul-Stevens and Eudocia. Stephens hired to McGrouder at the Coal Pits, Eudocia hired to Dan'l Woode's son not far from Col. Saunders."
(This girl was bought from John McCaul January 2, 1811.) Also "tell Mrs. F. McCaul at Hennrico her old man died last night."

[56] Letter from R. S. Ellis to Mr. Charles Ellis, his brother, from Red Hill, Virginia, December 11, 1811. *Ellis & Allan Papers.* "Mr. Were has returned the horse we sold him saying he was lame and too small, Brother Joshua was married on 3rd instant., all your hogs are disposed of except 3," etc.

[57] This warehouse was rented from Joseph Galligo for $137.50 a quarter. *Ellis & Allan Papers.*

hams, and the little puncheons of rum and powder, while the clerks weighed out the rolls of ponderous lead. Students on their way to William and Mary presented letters of credit from their up-country sires. Ladies came to make choice of taffetas and brocade stuffs, young gentlemen pursers, in semi-nautical garb, strolled in and out with accounts and monies, while Ellises, Allans, Mackenzies, McMurdocks and MacDougals punctuated the snuff-dusty air with the *bur* of broadest Scotch, and John Allan strolled off down Tobacco Alley with some British or Yankee captains to dinner at the cozily furnished house around the corner. Here their weathered seamen's countenances looked masterfully across the table at the engaging Miss Valentine and the wide-eyed young Edgar Poe, as Frances Allan brewed a strong dish of the best of Imperial Gunpowder Tea, and her husband spoke feelingly of the fine nappy ale of Kilmarnock.[58]

The conversation was of the decline in the flax prices at Lisbon, of the latest alarms and excursions of Bonaparte, the Orders in Council, and the prices last fetched at Liverpool for the best Virginia leaf. To this board and household the young housewife of twenty-five summers and her sister Miss Valentine brought a fresh blonde beauty and the traditions of grace and ease of Virginia planters, together with an unfailing feminine tenderness in which a sensitive little orphan boy basked. It was the atmosphere of the old, vanished Eastern Sea-board, the South of slavery and the days of sailing ships, something to be recalled over a glass of old port and a churchwarden's clay pipe. Out of this, it had pleased the wayward ways of fate to conjure a prince and a master of dreams.

Despite the considerable volume of business carried on by the partners, the condition of John Allan's affairs in December, 1811, were not such as to permit the addition of another soul to his permanent household without his pausing to take thought.[59] When

[58] Letter from Allan Fowlds, Kilmarnock, Scotland, 4th of January, 1812. "Mrs. F. is keeping for you some fine nappy ale," etc. *Ellis & Allan Papers.*

[59] The somewhat detailed account of the firm's affairs given above should not lead the reader to suppose that at this time, 1812, Mr. Allan was a wealthy man. The business was as yet a young one, the firm was new and struggling, and entering upon a period of general commercial stagnation.



William Mayo

The Master of "Powhatan Seat"

A plantation on the site of an old Indian settlement in the suburbs of Richmond, Va.

A gentleman of the Old Virginia school, a type familiar to Poe during the days of his childhood. *Mr.* Mayo was a member of Poe's church, a customer of *Ellis & Allan*, and a friend of Poe's foster-father

By permission of Mrs. Mary Mayo Ingle, a great-grandaughter

Frances Allen brought young Edgar Poe home the day after the death of his mother, her husband no doubt regarded it as the kindly and impulsive act of a woman, but as the days and weeks passed and the problem of what to do with the two orphans grew pressing with both the Allans and Mackenzies, it became evident that the hands of the pretty young boy had twined very deeply in the heartstrings of the childless merchant's wife — that she could not bear to part with him. Doubtless he clung to her; his beauty and already romantic story were appealing — to the child-hungry woman it was enough.

With her husband, however, it was different.[60] He was willing and kindly enough to indulge his lovely wife in a temporary charitable impulse, against which no one but a boor would protest, but to make the object of it his legal son and heir, with all that would be involved, was a horse of a different color. That he was altogether justified in this hesitancy, few, who can imagine themselves confronted by a like problem, will deny. Left an orphan himself, he could not but have been moved by the fate of the child who rode cock-horse so engagingly, or sat upon his knee, but it was by no means sure that he and his wife might not yet have children themselves — she was twenty-five and he was thirty-one — and the prospects of his own issue sharing alike with strangers, even in future time, might well daunt him. Besides, to put it coldly, and he was capable of doing that, the brat of strolling play actors, as his Scottish tongue would frame it, was perhaps not the best of blood to claim as his own. That he had his doubts about Mrs. Poe, we have already seen. David Poe he must have seen upon the stage, and he was capable of drawing his own conclusions. Besides John Allan had social ambitions as the future showed. What of the whispers about his "son"? In addition there were other more practical, and at that time secret, but cogent reasons, which might well make him pause.

In the first place, the posture of his affairs was not at that time such as to warrant the additional burden of the keep and

[60] As a great deal of criticism has been levelled against John Allan for not legally adopting Poe and making him his heir, the question will be presented here with the facts which have not heretofore been aired.

education of a child. In March, 1811, he had sailed to Portugal [61] with a considerable cargo on the ship " Sylph " in company with one or two other vessels employed by the Ellises, himself, and Mr. Galt, in expectation of selling provisions to the British Army under Lord Wellesley, just then about to open the Peninsular Campaign. Prices were high and some profit resulted, but owing to the precarious situation of affairs in America just prior to the then imminent war, the gain had been swallowed up, and he had returned to Richmond in the Summer to meet a decidedly serious and widespread financial situation owing to the Embargo and Non-Intercourse Acts.

In addition, his whole family relationship was liberally provided with orphans. He, and four partially dependent sisters at Irvine and Kilmarnock, Scotland, were orphans. The children of at least one of his married sisters were the object of the bounty of himself and his wife, a niece being Mrs. Allan's namesake. There was an old Aunt Jane, " the only surviving member of our father's family," and four young orphan boys, cousins by the name of Galt. These boys had to be, and were, well taken care of by remittances from Mr. William Galt, the wealthy Richmond uncle. That orphans and their doings were much in Mr. Allan's mind about this time, and that he might well shrink from adding another and gratuitous one to the family rôle of charity, a few extracts from the family correspondence will make startlingly clear.[62]

Kilmarnock, 4th Jan. 1812.

My Dear Brother: (*read brother-in-law*)

I wrote you some time back with the Melancholy News of the Death of my Little Boy William which I hope you have received. I had your

[61] Letter from John Allan to Charles Ellis in the *Ellis & Allan Papers,* postmarked New York, June 16, 1811, and dated — Lisbon, April 28, 1811, Ship " Sylph " off Bellumcastle — " Dear Charles: I am happy to inform you that we arrived in safety here on the 26th about 12 A.M. after a most boisterous passage of 23 days from the roads."

Also John Allan from Lisbon, May 31st, 1811 —

" McLurin Scott has taken passage on board of the Ship ' Telegra ' for New York to sail the 2nd or 3rd of June. I shall not be long after him." Josiah Ellis accompanied Mr. Allan on the voyage. It was the intention of both of them to visit Scotland on their way back, but this had to be deferred.

[62] From the *Ellis & Allan Papers,* Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.

favor of the 6th of August . . . which gave us all great pleasure to hear that you and Mrs. A was in good health, and received from Mr. Kerr the coral Necklace and Braceletts as a present from Mrs. Allan to her Little Namesake. I am glad to inform you she is getting quite about and is I trust beginning to walk, the rest of the children is all at school. . . . I had another from your uncle Mr. Galt, and I cannot help thinking he is one of the best-hearted Men, his great anxiety for the Education and support of those Little Orphan Boys the Galts show it in a clear point of view he has appointed me to look after them and see everything done for their interest . . . they seem smart fine children. . . . Your Uncle was so very kind as to send Mrs. Fowlds a present for the education of my children one hundred pounds sterling. . . . Dear Brother we are fully expecting to see you and Mrs. Allan this summer. . . . Your sisters Mary, Jean, and Elizabeth are well. . . . Elizabeth is at Mrs. Galts at Flowerbanks. Mrs. Fowlds desires me to say to you that she received the five guineas for which please accept her warmest thanks . . . etc.

I am My Dear Brother
Yours sincerely,
ALLAN FOWLDS

Some time later we get further news of the orphans from Mrs. Fowlds, John Allan's sister:

MY DEAR BROTHER:

Your Letters of Feby. 3rd and July 6th I duly record. . . . I was extremely sorry to observe by it the account my Aunt has given of poor Thomas Galt. I flatter myself he is not so bad as has been represented he is an Orphan, John, and I am convinced, none of his faults will be hid; my Aunt and him had not sorted well some how or other; but sister Jane blamed the Maid for it: however, she was so displeased she would not allow him to sleep in the House last time he was at home and Robt. Gemmel took him and I heard the vessel was to be laid up for the Winter and I wished him to stay with me as . . . was informed the Owners were going to put him on board another vessel so his education will be kept back this Winter he is a clever Boy I am told and an excellent scholar and I have no doubt not withstanding all his boyish faults he will be a clever Man he is the best Looking of the whole. *I myself know what it is to be an Orphan they require to walk very circumspectly indeed to escape the censours of a criticising World. . . .*

But the tale of family troubles is not quite complete, John Allan's sister it appears may have had her own reasons for suspecting the frailty of womankind, — the same letter continues —

. . . I was extremely happy to observe that Jane and you were come to an understanding, nothing gives me greater uneasiness than friends quarrelling. Were you not extremely sorry when you heard Cousin William had acted so very foolishly, she was young and thoughtless no doubt but no such apology can be offered for a Man at least 28 or 30 years older than her the betraying the trust Mrs. Galt [63] had reposed in him was not honorable and is what aggravated the trial to think she had encouraged a man to go about her house who was doing everything in his power to destroy the peace of it. However, Mrs. G. is reconciled. . . . I hope Uncle William will forgive her and not let her impropriety have any influence on him as she was a good hearted Girl and had an innocent gaiety about her. I would have not have thought her capable of so imprudent a step. . . . Jean Guthrie calls often and asks for her Johnny she was here yesterday inquiring for you . . . etc.

As Mr. John Allan, merchant, then in some financial perplexity, turned these and other family matters over in his mind, he cannot be entirely blamed for a certain lack of enthusiasm and pessimism about orphans. But there were several other reasons why he could not acquiesce in the immediate adoption of the boy Edgar Poe, reasons of which there is every right to suppose he did not and could not present to his wife. He was already a father, by two other women in Richmond, of several children, a daughter by one and a son by the second.[64] One of these, a son, by a Mrs. Collier, he was then, or a few months later, educating if not supporting, as is shown by the following receipt from William Richardson, a Richmond schoolmaster.[65]

[63] This is a Mrs. Galt at "Flowerbanks" on Cree Water. See Chapter V, page 69.

[64] John Allan's illegitimate children at the time that Poe was taken into his household were certainly two, *i.e.*, a daughter by a "Mrs. Wills" and a son by a "Mrs. Collier." There are traces of still others a little later not mentioned here or in the will. Young Poe was sent to school with Edwin Collier. For further complications as late as 1834, see John Allan's will, Appendix III.

[65] *Ellis & Allan Papers*, Library of Congress, Washington, D. C. The evidence does not rest on this one item by any means.

1812 *Mr.* JOHN ALLAN, *Dr.*
To WILLIAM RICHARDSON

Oct.
5th To three Months Tuition of Edwin Collier — $5—
Received payment
WILLIAM RICHARDSON

That the good Scotch merchant was not cast down entirely by these responsibilities, that he had the solace which is said to soothe the breast, and was willing to pay for it, as for his other pleasures, is brought out nicely by another item of about the same date —[65]

Mr. J. ALLAN 14 *Oct.* 1812[66]
Bought @ Auction
1 Flute $21—
Received payt. for Foster and Satchell
TH. FOSTER

It is, in all probability, the same flute upon which Edgar Allan Poe afterwards learned to play in those early, easy days in Richmond which were to permeate his dreams, for circumstances and Frances Allan prevailed, and Edgar Poe became the foster-child of John Allan.

The circumstances which added the force of public opinion to the already patent desire of his wife to retain Edgar, and which was the immediate decisive factor in persuading John Allan to acquiesce in her desire, was one of those fearful tragedies whose only mitigation lies in the fact that they arouse universal charity. On December 26, 1811, only about two weeks after Mrs. Poe had been buried at St. Johns, the Richmond Theater, where she had so often played, took fire from the stage chandelier during a presentation of the *Bleeding Nun* by Mr. Placide and his Company to a packed house. It was the night after Christmas. The results were for a generation, memory-searing. Among the seventy-three persons who are known to have perished was the Governor of Virginia.

[66] *Ellis & Allan Papers,* Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.

On that night an Herculean negro blacksmith strode through the flames along with other persons engaged in the work of rescue: heroism, pathetic sacrifice, and children in the fire moved to one outcry the then not too United States. The Federal Senate purchased crepe sleeve bands, and even the Legislature of Massachusetts was melted to official tears. This letter will give some idea of how John Allan felt about it at the time, and why he and all his family escaped. It is from a friendly commercial correspondent.

New York, Jany. 8th, 1812

JOHN ALLAN, *Esq.,*
DEAR SIR:

I received your favor of the 3rd inst. . . . Of the Horrible Catastrophe which befel your city I have indeed had too correct information — , it was first announced here by a gentleman from Washington who reported, that as he was leaving, the mail arrived from Richmond announcing it. My Fears were it would prove too true and knowing the confined manner in which the Stairs were built I felt confident (I) would hear of the loss of some Friends, which the next day's mail brought, and with it, a detail of all the Horror of that Fatal night — *How fortunate, that yourself and Family went out of Town* and what a consolation that Mr. Richard and family escaped as they did with the exception of poor little George Dixon whose fate I must lament with you. . . . My God what must be the feelings of Mr. Gallego and Mayor Gibson and Family, but I must stop I am going too far. . . .

W. WHITLOK, *Jun.*[67]

Miss Valentine escaped too, having been on a holiday visit with the Ellises in the country to see "Uncle Joshua" married.[68] John Allan had good reason to congratulate himself, doubtless he felt grateful that so far he had escaped the flames, and reflected that a little insurance with Providence as to the future might pay. All of Richmond was at that time busy in works of charity. Orphans were being cared for by wholesale, and the up-

[67] *Ellis & Allan Papers,* Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.

[68] From Eliza M. Hunter, niece of Charles Ellis, at Red Hill, Virginia, January, 1812, to Charles Ellis of *Ellis & Allan* at Richmond. "Nancy went home about four weeks ago with Cousin Betsy to Cynthia Hunter. They came up to the wedding and spent a few weeks with us."



The Burning of the Theatre in Richmond, Virginia

on the Night of December 26, 1811

This was the theatre in which Elizabeth Arnold Poe, mother of Edgar Allan Poe, was acting just before her death on December 8, 1811

Copyright on photograph applied for by the Edgar Allan Poe Shrine, Richmond, Virginia, through whose courtesy it is here reproduced



The Monumental Church, Richmond, Virginia

Mr. ALLAN and his partner held pew 80, where the young POE sat with his foster-parents

From a very rare old print

Courtesy of the Edgar Allan Poe Shrine, Richmond, Virginia

shot of the matter was that the Poe children remained where they had been taken; Edgar in John Allan's house, and little Rosalie at Mr. William Mackenzie's.

In Edgar's case, that his fostering in the house where he had been sheltered was mainly due to the intercession and insistence of Frances Allan, there can no longer be any doubt. There is the direct statement of one of the family servants to that effect and even *the possibility* that Frances Allan was so anxious to keep the beautiful young boy in lieu of the child which nature denied her, that she failed to answer the inquiries of his anxious grandparents in Baltimore, " General " David Poe and his wife,[69] and Edgar's Aunt, Eliza Poe. Even after more than a hundred years there is something touching in the beseeching tone of this long dead voice speaking out of the dry mould of government archives with the deep anxiety of tears.

Baltimore, Feb. 8th, 1813

'Tis the Aunt of Edgar that addresses Mrs. Allen for the second time, impressed with the idea that a letter if received could not remain unacknowledged so long as from the months of July, she is induced to write again in order to inquire in her family's as well as in her own name after the health of the child of her Brother, as well as that of his adopted Parents. I cannot suppose my dear Mrs. Allen that a heart possessed of such original humanity as yours must without doubt be, could so long keep in suspense, the anxious inquiries made through the medium of my letter by the Grand Parents of the Orphan of an unfortunate son, surely ere this allowing that you did not wish to commence a correspondence with one who is utterly unknown to you had you received it Mr. Allen would have written to my Father or Brother if it had been only to let them know how he was, but I am confident that you never received it, for two reasons, the first is that not having the pleasure of knowing your christian name I merely addressed it to Mrs. Allen of Richmond, the second is as near as I can recollect you were about the time I wrote to you at the springs where Mr. Douglas saw you, permit me my dear madam to thank you for your kindness to the little Edgar — he is truly the child of fortune to be

[69] The reader will doubtless recall the fact that Edgar's elder brother, William Henry Poe, was already residing with this couple, having been left with them by his parents in 1807. See page 4 for this. For a further account of " General " David Poe see Chapter VII, note 172.

placed under the fostering care of the amiable Mr. and Mrs. Allen, Oh how few meet with such a lot — the Almighty Father of the Universe grant that he may never abuse the kindness he has received and that from those who were not bound by any ties except those the feeling and humane heart dictates — I fear that I have too long intruded on your patience, will you if so have the goodness to forgive me — and dare I venture to flatter myself with the hope that this will be received with any degree of pleasure or that you will gratify me so much as to answer it — give my love to the dear little Edgar and tell him tis his Aunt Eliza who writes this to you, my Mother and family desire to be affectionately remembered to Mr. Allen and yourself — Henry frequently speaks of his little brother and expresses a great desire to see him, tell him he sends his very best love to him and is greatly pleased to hear that he is so good as also so pretty a Boy as Mr. Douglass represented him to be — I feel as if I were writing to a sister and can scarcely even at the risk of your displeasure prevail on myself to lay aside my pen — With the hope of your indulgence in pardoning my temerity I remain my Dear Mrs. Allen yours

with the greatest respect

Eliza Poe

Mrs. Allen the kind Benefactress of the infant Orphan Edgar, Allen, Poe.[70]

Now there are some remarkable things about this letter. In the first place Rosalie is not mentioned at all for which there are several possible explanations that suggest themselves,[71] secondly this letter definitely disposes of the story repeated by so many Poe biographers that either the Allans or the Mackenzies entered into correspondence with the Poes in Baltimore who refused *on account of poverty* to take in the two orphans. Evidently nothing of the kind had occurred, and as a matter of fact the shoe was on the other foot. In a letter which Poe wrote to his guardian from West Point in 1830, he specifically mentions the fact that John Allan had followed his own desire, or the desire of his wife to

[70] The letter is printed, of course, with the original spelling and punctuation carefully reproduced from a photostat of the original in the *Ellis & Allan Papers*. "Allan" is spelt "Allen" by Eliza Poe.

[71] There are several explanations of this possible:

1. Eliza Poe simply failed to mention Rosalie or chose not to.
2. She did not care to confuse issues with Mr. Allan by mentioning Rosalie.
3. The Poes did not know there was such a child.
4. The Poes were already in communication with the Mackenzies.

adopt Edgar Poe, despite the express wishes of the grandfather, "General" David Poe, to have the care of his favorite grandchild. Poe represents that his grandfather was *in good circumstances at the time,* and that in order to induce the Poes to allow Edgar to remain with the Allans, John Allan had held out strong inducements for them to do so by promises of adoption and liberal education. This letter Poe says was at that time (January 3rd, 1830) in possession of the members of the Poe family in Baltimore.[72] The implication is clear, once having determined to gratify the fond wishes of his wife for the "adoption" of Edgar, John Allan carried the matter off with his usual vigor and determination.

Hence Eliza Poe seems more than doubtful as to whether her letter to Lady Bountiful is going to be answered. It is also interesting to observe that two commas in the last line quite subtly, and thus early assert the boy's right to his own name. There is a tradition but no record to show that both Edgar and Rosalie were baptized respectively as Edgar Allan[73] and Rosalie Mackenzie, but as neither was ever *legally* adopted they remained "Poe," as they had been born.[74] Thus the boy came by the name of Edgar Allan Poe, which he has successfully projected into time. Aside from this, the baptismal water left very little trace.

Like other mortals the young Poe was subject to those internal frailties and afflictions which cause parents endless anxiety, and Mrs. Allan must often have found herself, with this rather delicate and pretty little boy, filling the rôle of mother in grim earnest. Let it be solemnly recorded then for the first time, that in May, 1812, "Israfel" was afflicted with the croup for which his foster-father paid the bill. As the earliest documentary evidence of Poe's being in John Allan's household it is not without a genuine element of interest:

[72] Poe to John Allan from West Point, New York, January 3, 1831. See the *Valentine Museum Letters,* letter No. 24, page 253.

[73] J. H. Whitty says, probably as early as December 11, 1811, in the case of Edgar. See his *Memoir* to *The Complete Poems,* page XXII, large edition. There is also a tradition that both the children were baptized by the Reverend Mr. Richardson of St. John's.

[74] Legal adoption outside of the ties of blood was almost unknown in the South at this time. Prof. James Southall Wilson to the author, July, 1925.

Mr. JOHN ALLAN

To P. THORNTON

1812		
May 21st.	To Visit and medicine to child	$1.50
22nd.	To Visit	1.00
23rd.	To Visit and Vial Pectoral Mint	1.50
		$4.00

Rect. payment
PHILIP THORNTON [75]

In July, as we have seen, the family visited the Springs where Edgar was evidently noticed by a Mr. Douglas of Baltimore who remarked upon his great beauty to his aunt Eliza Poe. That the young boy was a really lovely child, whose winsome appearance and romantic story appealed to all tender hearts, there is a mass of testimony and tradition to attest. Frances Allan was evidently in love with her little pet, now nearly three years old, an affection which he is known to have passionately returned. Sometime in the Fall the family returned to Richmond, probably after having visited Mrs. Allan's relatives, the Valentines, near Staunton, as it was their custom to do. During the Winter of 1812 we find them in Richmond as usual living at the corner of Fourteenth Street and Tobacco Alley. " Uncle " William Galt seems to have been living with them then. Edgar was by this time for better or for worse a fixture in the household, where he was often seen by an Abner Lincoln of Boston who was at this time a frequent guest together with Dr. Thornton and the Ellises at John Allan's table.

Mr. Allan was in considerable difficulties, one of his ships having been seized by the customs authorities at Norfolk, and as he sat in front of the coal fire, pondering the style of his " prayer for release " to the Federal Court, his thoughts must have wandered over the water to the orphans at Kilmarnock or have paused between the wailing notes of his new flute to consider the future of the little orphan whose bare feet could be heard padding

[75] Philip Thornton was a doctor, the personal friend of John Allan. He is frequently mentioned in correspondence. The receipt is from the *Ellis & Allan Papers.*

about upstairs while he was being put to bed by "Ma" or "Aunt Nancy." John Allan, too, had his softer moods, and in the years ahead, he conceived a pride and a tenderness for the little lad whom he came to regard as his son. It was this which his proud heart never forgave; that the youth to whom he had once unbent and unbosomed, would not obey his behest, was unpardonable. For as with everything else that the merchant dealt in, there was a price to be paid for his affections, a price which the poet in Poe found too great to pay. It was the control of his heart and soul. But now, for a while at least, Lady Bountiful and her husband were in control of the clay, if not the spirit of the boy, and that momentous modeling had begun which was to make and mar the man.

CHAPTER IV
"The Little Angel" Tries His Wings

FRANCES ALLAN would undoubtedly have liked to adopt the young Edgar Allan Poe formally and legally but her husband continued to demur. It was only after considerable persuasion and the unexpected force of circumstances that he had at length consented to receive the boy permanently into his household. At first blush his refusal to adopt the child legally, after consenting to his becoming a fixture in the family circle and lending him his name, may seem a captious distinction, but from his point of view many poignant reasons continued to operate for refusing or at least deferring indefinitely such an irrevocable act. In addition to those which have already been rehearsed, there must have been a deep-seated feeling that in a certain way he would be overriding Providence by adopting a child that it had not pleased God to send him in the ordinary course of nature. The Scotch sense of literal reality is almost morbidly honest, and John Allan could not allow even his sympathy and affection to deceive him into believing by legal fiction what was in reality not true. He was willing to indulge his wife, with and for whom he doubtless felt a great sympathy in their mutual childlessness, but he was not willing to commit himself, without further demonstration as to the character of his ward, into declaring him to be the inheritor of his property. All this, and a certain instinctive sense of the vast gulf which separated the temperaments of himself and his ward, something which both of them must have instinctively felt almost from the first — all this, must have decided him that delay was the best policy, and as the good old Scotch adage has it, he had best " bide a wee."

In this decision he differed profoundly from the feminine impulsiveness of his wife, but the overwhelming desire of a childless woman for an object upon which to lavish the pent up ten-

derness of thwarted maternity, and the unemotional foresight of a clear-headed man of affairs are two different things. It is impossible to say, even now, which was right, — the blind love of the foster-mother, or the oblique though logical view of the man; possibly the former.

Had Edgar been legally adopted, it is probable that the feeling of eating the bread of strangers, of in the final analysis being an object of charity, of which fact he was often reminded, — it is quite possible that this feeling of inferiority against which he built up an almost morbid pride, destined to be one of the controlling factors in his character, would never have been present at all, or have vanished as time went on.

As it was, Poe was compelled to move in a world of uncertainties, one where the deepest and most intimate ties of life were, as he increasingly realized with the years, dependent upon the impulses of charity.

The illusion of the permanence of home and the immutability of the paternal and maternal relations are the twin rocks upon which a well integrated personality is built and stands. Shatter these, or give them the quality of uncertainty, and the spirit becomes one with the quickstand upon which it feels that life rests.

Even in the endearments of his foster-mother, Poe must have come to realize that he was a substitute for her own child. Her affections were great, but the fact remains that she was not his own mother. If he did not sense it, Mr. Allan on several well authenticated occasions took care to make it painfully clear. As a very young child, Edgar would have actually missed the physical presence of his own mother; as he grew older and her memory dimmed, he must have sought for compensation elsewhere. That Frances Allan met this situation with a plenitude of endearments that undoubtedly had an effect upon Poe's character there seems every reason to feel. Mrs. Allan's unusual fondness for children and for her foster-son in particular was the cause of remark at the time and later.[76] That her affection for the little boy was one of the holiest and finest of his many feminine contacts, does not

[76] See Mrs. Galt's letter to Frances Allan about the Galt children from Irvine, Scotland, in 1818, Chapter V, page 73.

lessen the probabilities of its far-reaching effects. In the same house was also his " Aunt " Nancy Valentine who seems to have been only a little less fond. In the light of modern psychology, it may well seem to many that this is alone sufficient to account for many of the apparent motions of his later life. It may be that from the first Edgar Allan Poe was embarked upon one of those hopeless quests of the soul that drive many artists to the greatest heights of creation and the lowest depths of despair.

As a little boy it seems that he cared more for the company of little girls than of boys of his own age, and that his school days were lonely and unhappy.[77] Though not unhealthy he was delicate, a condition in which his foster-mother indulged him, for he was brilliant and beautiful, and soon became the pet of the household and its friends. At a very early date he is said to have shown an innocent but passionate attachment for Catherine Elizabeth Potiaux, a pretty little girl, who as Mrs. Allan's godchild was one of his first playmates.[78] It was also Mrs. Allan's particular delight to take him upon calls to her various friends and relations, upon which occasions she is said to have dressed him in a charming costume of a peaked, purple velvet cap with a gold tassel from which his dark curls flowed down, like those of a Restoration periwig, over an ample tucker that disappeared into small baggy trousers of yellow Nankin or silk pongee. Seated upon a davenport, swinging his little buckled shoes in the air, he would gravely look on, while the assembled ladies dressed in the semi-classic empire costumes of the day, with fillets in their hair, chattered about the latest war news and sipped tea.

Sometimes he would be called upon to amuse the company by standing upon a high-backed chair to recite jingles. Tradition has it that the company was both delighted and amused. Even John Allan was not insensible to his juvenile talents, and we have a picture of the young Poe, mounted shoeless upon the long, shining dining room table, after the dessert and cloth had been cleared

[77] Poe in *Burton's Gentleman's Magazine* for April, 1840. " Since the sad experience of my schoolboy days to this present writing, I have seen little to sustain the notion held by some folks, that schoolboys are the happiest of all mortals."

[78] J. H. Whitty, *Memoir,* large edition, page XXIV.

away, to dance; or standing between the doors of the drawing room at the Fourteenth Street house reciting to a large company, and with a boyish fervor, *The Lay of the Last Minstrel.* "He wore dark curls and had brilliant eyes, and those who remembered him spoke of the pretty figure he made, with his vivacious ways." [79] The reward for such occasions was to pledge the healths of the company in sweetened wine and water. Much has been made of this fact, which in all conscience seems harmless and trivial enough.[80]

Of the early life in Richmond of this delightful little boy, who later on felt competent to exchange places with the Archangel Israfel, there remains a mass of legend and some few authentic facts. Perhaps it will not be entirely without some contribution as to the nature of the man as a human being to get a few glimpses of him trying out his young wings even before he aspired to leave the nest.

Some of the earliest and dearest associations of Poe's life clustered about the old Memorial Church on Broad Street which had been erected on the site of the Richmond Theater as a memorial to those who had perished in the fire.[81] John Allan and Charles Ellis had both subscribed to the fund for its erection, the latter twice as much as his partner,[82] and both had taken out their membership there after leaving St. Johns. This was consonant with a well marked determination to better the social status of the "firm."

The building was an impressive one with a monument to the sufferers of the fire at the entrance, a rather *naïve* fresco of the heavenly regions on the ceiling, tablets with the Ten Commandments, and a great gold lettered text, "Give Ear O Lord," just over the chancel. It was the custom of all the children to try out their spelling on this, and Mary Brockenbrough, a little girl one

[79] Woodberry.

[80] See the discussion of Poe's early drinking in Chapter IX, page 167.

[81] The history of this church is in itself very interesting and closely connected with the successful reëstablishment of the Protestant Episcopal Church in Virginia which had suffered a serious eclipse during the Revolution. Among those prominently concerned with it were Bushrod Washington and Chief Justice Marshall.

[82] The bills and receipts for this are in the *Ellis & Allan Papers* at Washington.

year younger than Poe, remembered looking back and seeing Poe, " a pretty little boy with big eyes and curly hair " hypnotized by the text.

The Allans had pew 80 and, from the end where he usually sat, Poe could see the back of little Mary's head obliquely in front. Just across the nave was the front pew of Chief Justice Marshall and his long-legged son who sat with the gate open and his feet in the aisle. The Allan pew was directly before the pulpit in which the stout Bishop Moore, rector of the church at that time, held forth, to what effect upon Israfel we can only surmise, probably the usual one.

It was here that Poe first met his youthful companion Ebenezer Burling, of whom more hereafter, and laid that foundation of familiarity with the Bible and the church services and singing which he never lost.[83] One biographer has averred " that phrenologically considered," the bump of reverence was entirely lacking in both Poe and Rosalie and that they never evinced any interest in the saving works of religion.[84] However that may be, to church he went regularly in the company of Mrs. Allan who was extremely pious. From his foster-father who had a more eighteenth century and encyclopædic attitude and philosophy, Edgar undoubtedly received or overheard opinions which made him one of the first poets in America to view the world minus the explanation of a miracle working deity, and to take a metaphysical interest in the growing data of science.

Among the many visitors to the house then and later, was Mr. Edward Valentine, a cousin of Mrs. Allan, who was very fond of the boy. He was a great practical joker and by way of being somewhat of a merry rogue himself.[85] This young gentleman taught young Edgar several amusing tricks. One of these was the ancient amusement of snatching a chair away from someone

[83] I am indebted to the kindness of Mrs. Mary Newton Stanard for the reminiscences of her grandmother, Mary Brockenbrough, here included. See also J. H. Whitty's *Memoir,* large edition, page XXV. Also Mrs. Shew's account of Poe in church, taken from the *Ingram Papers.*

[84] Mrs. Susan Archer Weiss in *The Home Life of Poe.*

[85] For several amusing facts about this gentleman I am indebted to Mr. Edward V. Valentine, the well known sculptor, of Richmond, Virginia, which he related to me in July, 1925.



Rt. Rev. Richard Channing Moore

First Rector of the Monumental Church, Richmond, Virginia

Where EDGAR POE attended with his foster-parents, — and Protestant Episcopal Bishop of Virginia

The Monumental Church was completed in 1814 on the site of the burned "Richmond Theatre," in which POE's mother had often played, and where she received two benefits while on her death bed. JOHN ALLAN's pew was No. 80, directly in front of the pulpit; there POE sat and looked up into *Bishop* MOORE's face

By permission of Mrs. Mary Mayo Ingle

about to sit down. Unfortunately the newly acquired talent was tried upon the person of a portly and extremely dignified lady caller, and tradition has preserved for us the picture of John Allan leading his too pert young charge away for chastisement after the old fashioned manner, and of Mrs. Allan with tears in her eyes hurrying upstairs shortly after to quiet the lamentations of her pet.

As a counterbalance to his wife's indulgence, Mr. Allan conscientiously set about to train up the boy according to his more severe ideas of the proper way in which the twig should be bent. Consequently, when the child was "good," he was indulged, but any exhibition of waywardness or disobedience brought down on him the usual punishment of the time which, it was said, was administered to him upon divers occasions with undue severity. To save him from this was the constant aim of the ladies, and even the servants of the household. With their connivance the boy soon learned to shield himself by means of petty subterfuges upon his own part which were doubtless more clever than manly.

The child's education was early well looked after. As a very little boy, there is a trustworthy legend that he was sent to a "dame school," which would correspond most nearly to the modern kindergarten, minus much of the element of organized play. This was said to have been kept by an old Scotch lady with a broad Lowland accent, doubtless in itself a recommendation to the parents of many of her charges. Of her, very little is remembered except a rumor that she called Edgar, "her ain wee laddie," and in after years was said to have brought him presents of the best smoking tobacco she could obtain (sic).[86] Poe also indicates in a seemingly autobiographical passage in *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym,* "He (Mr. Allan) sent me at six years of age to the school of old Mr. Ricketts, a gentleman with only one arm, and of eccentric manner." It has since been found that there was in Richmond about that time a one-armed schoolmaster by the name of "Ricketts."[87] One William Richard-

[86] This story rests upon evidence that can be questioned.

[87] I am indebted for the sources of this information to Mr. J. H. Whitty's *Memoir* to *The Complete Poems.*

son also kept a boys' school where John Allan sent some of the other children in whom he was interested in 1813–14. The truth is, it is not definitely known exactly where and to whom Poe first went to school.

It is fairly certain, however, that shortly before the departure of the Allans for England in 1815, Poe was a student with a Mr. William Erwin who kept a boys school in Richmond at that time.[88] Erwin from his letters seems to have had a dry sense of humor, and in addition to have taken a real interest in his young charge, remarking in a letter some two years after the lad had left him that "He is a charming boy," and inquiring what he was reading. Evidently, even by 1814 or 1815, Poe was one of those strange freaks of nature in a school, a boy who took a lively interest in his books. Mr. Erwin also received payments from John Allan for Edwin Collier, the natural son, from March 15, 1815, to March 15, 1818. In all probability young Collier attended the school in 1815 at the same time as Edgar Poe.[89] There are also indications that Mr. Allan was educating others of his progeny about this time elsewhere, as the firm of *Ellis & Allan* was called upon by other teachers for their tuition.[90]

There is another side to Edgar Poe's childhood for which, by the nature of things, there can be very little documentary evidence, yet one that careful inference has every right to draw. It is that of his intimate association with negroes as a Southern boy brought up in Richmond during the days of slavery, and of the profound affect which their rhythms, melodies and folk-tales must have had upon his imagination.

From earliest childhood Poe must also have listened to a con-

[88] Letter from William Erwin dated Richmond, November 27th, 1817, to John Allan in London.

[89] Letter from William Erwin to John Allan from Richmond, Virginia, November 29, 1815.

Letter from John Allan to William Erwin from London, England, March 21, 1818.

[90] Young Collier seems to have been withdrawn from his former schoolmaster, William Richardson, sometime in 1814 and to have entered with William Erwin, March, 1815. Whether Poe went to school also under William Richardson, or whether Erwin succeeded Richardson in the business is not clear. The whereabouts and names of the other children have only a remote connection with Poe at this time, and, for obvious reasons, they are not elaborated upon in the text.

tinuous stream of oral narratives and exploits related by the sea captains, merchants and adventurers who sat at his foster-father's table and later on unburdened themselves before the fire. That much of his flair for sea narrative was the result of this seems a warrantable inference.

That the boy often found himself seated by the glowing hearth of many a negro cabin, or, in the slave quarters, listening to the weird tales of the dark tenants and swaying to the syncopations of their songs is inevitable. Northern critics and biographers seem, largely, to have forgotten that Edgar Allan Poe was a Southerner raised in the South. To them, the importance of his early environment, and the romantic and grotesque incidents of the life about him in his early but impressionable boyhood, must, for the most part, on account of their lack of sympathy with something which they have never experienced or suspected, be forever a closed book.

For if there is one thing more than any other which sets off that portion of the Union where Poe was raised, the Old South, "Uncle Sam's Other Country," from all other sections, it is the exotic and withal grotesque presence and influence of the negro. He, more than any other factor, he, and the soft languor of its sub-tropical springs and summers, are responsible for the combined squalor and glamor of its ancient villages and towns. Here transplanted to a new environment in a more boreal continent, the negro has created for himself another native habitat, and no one who lives there can fail to come under the peculiar and oft-times fatal influence of his methodical-chaos of life. To this influence the receptive and imaginative mind of young Poe was constantly subjected during the most impressionable years of his childhood.[91]

Like all well-bred Virginia boys, he had his own negro "mammy" up until the time when the family left for England in 1815.[92] The life of the white man overshadows and often checks

[91] One biographer avoids much of this by saying, "The psychology of a poet's boyhood is obscure."

[92] Possibly the "Juliet" or the "Eudocia" mentioned by receipts and the bills of sale as being in John Allan's household. See note 45 *ante*.

the exuberance and strangeness of the *modus vivendi* of the darky; the " black secrets " and the magic of his real existence are seldom penetrated by the adult members of the dominant race. Children, however, are always privileged characters, and young Edgar, as a prime favorite and pet of the family, must often have sat by their firesides in the rooms of his foster-father's house-servants in Richmond, or in the slave-quarters and cabins upon the plantations at which he was a frequent visitor.

There he must have feasted upon corn-pone and listened, while many a tale of Bre'r Rabbit and his ilk went round, while the ghosts, and " hants " and spooks of an ignorant but imaginative and superstitious people walked with hair-raising effect, and songs with melancholy harmonies and strange rhythms beat themselves into his consciousness with that peculiar ecstasy and abandon which only children and the still half-savage individuals of a childish race can experience. Here it was then, rather than upon some mythical journey to France or Russia, that he first laid the foundation for his weird imaginings and the strange " new " cadences which he was to succeed later on in grafting upon the main stream of English poetry. Here too may have arisen his flair for the bizarre, and the concept that birds and animals were speaking characters, and that fear of graves and corpses and the paraphernalia of the charnel, so peculiarly a characteristic of the negro, which haunted him through the rest of his life. Reliable tradition, indeed, has preserved some incidents which confirm the probability.

One Summer, when Edgar was about six years old, the Allans paid a visit to one of the smaller Virginia Springs, and on their way back to Richmond stopped to visit Mrs. Allan's relatives, the Valentines, at Staunton. Edward Valentine, whose interest in Edgar has already been remarked, was fond of organizing wrestling matches for small money prizes between Edgar and the little pickaninnies with whom he played. He would also take young Poe about the country driving, or seated behind him on horseback. Valentine is responsible for the story that once as they were returning from the country post-office, where Edgar had astonished the rustics with his infant learning by reading a

newspaper aloud to them,[93] on the way home, they passed a log cabin near which were several graves. The boy betrayed such nervous terror that Mr. Valentine was forced to take Edgar from his seat behind, and hold him before him on the horse, while the boy kept crying out, " They will run after us and drag me down." Upon being questioned later, he admitted that it had been the custom of his " mammy " to take him at night to the servant's quarters — " Where many a tale of grave-yard ghost went round " — and he had been regaled with gruesome stories of cemeteries and horrible apparitions. To such incidents as these there can be little doubt that American Literature owes a considerable debt. The time had come, however, when Edgar Poe was to be removed temporarily from such plantation influences and plunged into the midst of an older, and perhaps more civilized and complicated world. With the cessation of hostilities after the Treaty of Ghent in 1815, John Allan had decided to pay a long deferred visit to England and Scotland, and the family went abroad.

The early Spring and Summer of 1815 must have been largely occupied by the family preparations for the voyage in which Edgar would naturally have taken a lively interest. Frances Allan had been hurt in an accident and the departure was delayed. We catch a final authentic but fleeting glimpse of the boy at this time, when the easy flow of his happy childhood in Richmond was about to be interrupted by an important remove. From the reminiscences of one Dr. C. A. Ambler,[94] afterwards a well known physician, we learn that about this time he used to swim with Edgar Poe at a pool in Shockoe Creek, then situated where the

[93] There is an interesting letter in the *Ellis & Allan Papers* which throws considerable light on the state of culture among the poorer up-country whites at this time, in which one of the Ellises depicts their incredulity over his prediction of an eclipse of the sun, and their superstitious astonishment at its fulfilment. The mental condition of these " poor whites " seems to have approached that of the medieval peasant during the early renaissance.

[94] This information is given in a letter from Dr. Ambler to Edward V. Valentine of Richmond, which the latter read to the author in July, 1925. The story of Shockoe Creek and its peregrinations and floods is closely interwoven with the history and fate of Richmond. In the early Nineteenth Century, a sudden flood in this stream prevented the perpetration of a massacre by an uprising of the slaves.

shops of the C. & O. Railroad now stand. Dr. Ambler says that he stripped with Edgar day after day, and that the boy was of a delicate physique and rather timid disposition, taking to the water a bit reluctantly.[95] The testimony as to Poe's physical development in childhood is not without value, and in many particulars confirms the evidence as to his early appearance. That he was about to be removed to a more bracing climate and exposed to the vigorous and sometimes brutal influences of the playgrounds of English schools for the next five years, cannot but have exerted a powerful influence upon his mental and physical equipment. The sunlight of Virginia, and the mists and snows of Scotland and Stoke Newington are two different things.

[95] Dr. Ambler states Poe was about "nine years old at this time." As Poe was in England during his ninth year, the doctor is mistaken on this point. Poe's later prowess as a swimmer is in contrast with this early timidity.

CHAPTER V
Israfel in Albion

THE correspondence of Poe's guardian John Allan with his relatives in Scotland during the year 1811 and 1812, and from then on to the end of the war, the letters from his sisters and brother-in-law at Irvine and Kilmarnock [96] fairly teem with references and invitations to him and his wife to revisit the haunts of his youth. In 1811 he had intended to return from Lisbon by way of Great Britain, when the imminence of hostilities intervened. The war, of course, had enforced the postponement of the family wishes, and his own, for some years. Now, at last, he was about to see them realized.

There were, in addition, business reasons the most urgent. The cessation of trade between England and America had borne peculiarly heavily upon the Virginia tobacco merchants. Accounts for cargoes shipped just before the war were still unsettled, and it was necessary to close these and to reëstablish personal relations with English houses in a market where tobacco prices were extraordinarily high, due to the cessation of supply, but which might be expected to be glutted as soon as intercourse was resumed, from the immense reserve stocks on hand. All of this required the personal presence of at least one member of the firm, and it was the junior partner, who, combining his personal desires and business advantage, undertook the mission to establish a foreign branch.[97]

Personally it must have been with a good deal of pleasure that John Allan looked forward to a reunion with his family upon his native heath. It had now been many years since he had left Scotland a penniless youth to make his fortunes in the land where

[96] See the letters in the *Ellis & Allan Papers,* Library of Congress, Washington, D. C., from John Allan's sisters, Mary, Elizabeth, Jane, and his brother-in-law, Allan Fowlds, from 1811 to 1814.

[97] Woodberry, 1909 edition, page 20.

fortunes were then to be made. The pot at the end of the rainbow had not proved a mere dream, and the orphan was returning to his relatives in comfortable, though not wealthy circumstances, enhanced social prestige, the prospect of his uncle's fortune in the foreground, and a beautiful young wife and sister-in-law, for Miss Valentine accompanied them. Perhaps not the least factor in his natural pride of accomplishment was the presence of his handsome, brilliant, and lovable little foster-son, Edgar, a living testimony to the charitable inclinations and capacity of his purse. Some stress has already been laid on the less appealing aspects of John Allan's character. It is only just to make the point, at this juncture, that there was also in the man a deep and abiding generosity and capability for the finer manifestations of human affection. Like most of us, this wily Scot had contradictions in his nature. He was capable, at once, of a generous bounty and a mean parsimony, a large tolerance and a bigoted determination to dominate. During his association with him, Edgar Poe experienced the entire gamut of the capabilities of a nature, the vigor of which can only be described by the adjective " tremendous." It was no weakling into whose nest the little fledgling had fallen, but that of a hawk, whose wings were strong to protect, but with talons that clutched, and a beak that pierced to the heart.

At the time when John Allan and his family sailed for England, the child Edgar had been taken not only into the house, but into the arms and heart of his foster-father. The merchant's correspondence at this date and afterwards bears unmistakable evidence of the pride, the affection and the hopes which he cherished for the boy, and it is safe to say that from 1815 to 1820, and for a year or two after, John Allan looked upon little " Edgar Allan " as he would have regarded the child of his loins. As for his wife, Frances, and her sister, — they were completely under the boy's spell. Only the cloud of his school days cast a shadow on an otherwise sunny landscape.

Before leaving Richmond, Mr. Allan auctioned his household furniture and some personal effects through the commission house of Monicure, Robinson & Pleasants, drew £335.10.6 from his

own firm, had his goods conveyed by dray and boat to the ship "Lothair" anchored in the James, and, on June 17, 1815, set sail for England with his wife, Miss Valentine and Edgar. From these facts it can be seen that he contemplated a stay of some duration.[98] Edgar left behind him his little sweetheart Catherine Potiaux of whom, even at this early age, he was very fond.

As the custom then was, Mr. Allan provided his own stores for the voyage. These he purchased partly in Richmond, while the rest came on board at Hampton Roads, sent over from Norfolk by the firm of Moses Myers & Sons. A few brief glimpses can be caught of the family during their voyage of thirty-six days. The "Lothair" sailed from the "Roads" on June 22, 1815, and a letter brought back by the pilot boat tells us that, "Ned (Edgar) cares but little about it, poor fellow." From later letters, from the other side, we learn that Edgar soon recovered, however, and inferences show us John Allan, or his pretty wife with the child on her lap in the cabin, instructing him out of *Murray's Reader, The Olive Branch,* or *Murray's Speller* which had been provided for the purpose at a cost of 16s. 6d.

They arrived at Liverpool July 28, 1815, and next day Mr. Allan writes his partner Charles Ellis that, "The ladies were *verry* sick. . . . Edgar was a little sick but had recovered." In Liverpool John Allan had business to transact with Ewart Myers & Company.

Apparently family ties in Scotland were powerful, for business detained them only a short while, and a few weeks later we find them at Greenock in Scotland, where they had probably just arrived, or had come over from Irvine only a few miles away in order to catch an outbound American mail. Evidently they succeeded, for we have this hurried letter from John Allan to Charles Ellis, his partner, written with the family hanging over

[98] Letters in the *Ellis & Allan Papers,* also see letter from Col. Thomas Ellis to Prof. Woodberry, from Baltimore, May 28, 1884, also J. H. Whitty *Memoir,* large edition, Appendix, page 192. The author of the school texts was Lindley Murray, and the *Reader* was / "The eleventh Philadelphia edition. / published by Johnson & Warner, / at their Stores in Philadelphia, and Richmond (Vir). / John Bouvier, Printer, / 1814. /

him with messages for home, and little Edgar pleading, " Pa, say something for me."

Greenock,[99] Sept. 21, 1815

D. CHARLES,

I arrived here about a half an hour ago . . . finding some American vessels on the eve of sailing I avail myself of the chance to write a few lines, though I cannot say much about our business . . . (evidently the time was too short. Here follow some price quotations of tobacco, of which he continues.) I flatter myself from the small quantity in London & the Postieur of affairs on the Continent that our sales will be profitable.

It would appear that France and the Allies have concluded a Treaty but it has not been promulgated — the Allies will hold the strong posts for a while until the refractory spirit of some of the old adherents of Bonaparte has subsided. France is far from being settled. Louis is too lenient & too peaceable the French delight in War I believe they care but little who rules them provided that ruler indulges them in their Habit which 25 years of war has so strongly fixed upon them.

Provisions of every description are extremely low here and in this quarter they are in the midst of Harvest, the crops are abundant and I think will be got in well. . . .

Frances says she would like the Land and lakes better if it was warmer and less rain, she bids me say she will write Margaret (Mrs. Ellis) as soon as she is settled but at present she is so bewildered with wonders that she *canna* write. Her best Love to Margaret & a thousand kisses to Thos. (Thos. Ellis a playmate of Poe) Nancy (*Miss Valentine*) says give my love to them all — Edgar says Pa say something for me, say I was not afraid coming across the Sea. Kiss Theo, (?) for him. We all write our best Love to my Uncle Galt and old Friends.

I am — etc.

JOHN ALLAN[100]

(*Postscript*) Edgars Love to Rosa & Mrs. Mackenzie.

Frances Allan's remarks about the weather in that part of Scotland where the Allans had gone to visit was by no means purely conversational. Greenock is officially the town with the

[99] A seaport of Renfrewshire about twenty-three miles from Glasgow on the Firth of Clyde. At this time it was one of the chief ports for American trade.

[100] The letter is evidently very hurriedly written, a little difficult to read in some places, which is unusual with John Allan, whose handwriting is large, round and clear. The lapse into Scotch is unusual and testifies to his agitation, or the effect of a return to early associations.

heaviest rainfall in Scotland,[101] and that is saying a good deal for the rain. It may have been that some early memories of this "dewey, misty" climate and

> . . . the chill seas
> around the misty Hebrides

were so thoroughly soaked into Edgar Poe that he long remembered the plashy fields about Irvine and Kilmarnock.

Another great poet tramping through Kilmarnock only three years later was overtaken by a rain in the very town, from whereabouts John Keats writes to Reynolds on July 13, 1818, that the rain had stopped him on the way to Glasgow. Mrs. Allan's meteorological observations are therefore confirmed by great authority, in which His Majesty's Weather Reports concur, so we may be *definitely* sure that rain it did.

For *a' that,* however, Irvine in Ayrshire, where the Allans "settled down" is in the heart of the Burns country, and was at that time a lovely little seaport on the north bank of the river of the same name crossed by a picturesque old stone bridge. Here Poe must often have stood to watch the ships, or have crossed on excursions with his father's young cousins and nephews, the Galt or Fowlds boys, over the river to Seagate or Stonecastle nearby, both picturesque ruins. An academy had been founded at Irvine centuries before the Allans arrived, and there during the Summer of 1815 he was sent to school, doubtless in company with several of his "cousins."[102]

The country about fairly swarmed with John Allan's relatives and friends, all anxious to welcome him, to see his beautiful wife and the "little boy," and to hear about the health of their rich uncle in Richmond, a theme of considerable family interest. A married sister and her husband, Allan Fowlds, lived at Kilmarnock with several children, among them Frances, the namesake to whom Mrs. Allan had sent the coral bracelet some years before. One cannot help wondering if Mrs. Fowlds had really

101 "64 inches."

102 J. H. Whitty *Memoir.* The rest of the information is gathered from a mass of family correspondence in the *Ellis & Allan Papers* and from competent descriptions of the places themselves.

saved some of her "nice nappy ale" for her brother, and if Jean Guthrie *did* come asking for "her Johnny," how Mrs. Allan took it.[103]

At Irvine itself, where the Allans seem to have set up some sort of housekeeping while Edgar went to the Academy, lived three other sisters, Eliza, Mary, and Jane, together with other relatives, the Walshes[104] and some friends, a Capt. James Solomon, whom Mr. Allan had befriended while a prisoner of war in America,[104] and Mr. Ferguson "who kept a fine gig and dashed about at a great rate."[105] There is also some reference to "little brothers,"[106] perhaps a term of affection for the Galt children, the orphans.

At any rate, despite the rain and the Scotch mist, we may be sure it was a merry little society and a pleasant home coming, and that young Edgar Poe and Nancy Valentine shared in the welcome. The bonds of family in Scotland are close, and these two fell within the magic circle. The country about is beautiful, and aroused Keats' admiration three years later, on his walking trip with Charles Armitage Brown.[107] At Kilmarnock, Poe could not escape hearing about Bobby Burns; "Highland Mary" is buried at Greenock; and the poet's lines and songs were at that time and for a generation to come on everyone's lips. Here they saw the strange effect of the long northern twilight and the eery red shadows of the sunsets long after the hour of a Virginia night-fall. Even in England in July the twilight does not end until about 10 P.M., and Poe reveled in just such light effects afterward, and strange valleys —

[103] Extracts from a letter to John Allan from his sister, Jane, at Irvine:

[104] "Mr. Walsh has purchased the great part of a galeaat and sails out of Irvine." There were Mr. and Mrs., and Jane Walsh in this family.

[105] "A very agreeable young man; I had the pleasure of being his bridesmaid."

[106] "All our little brothers are well and are making fine scholars."

[107] Extract from Keats' letter upon entering Ayrshire: "We came down upon everything suddenly — there were on our way the "bonny Doon," with the Brig that Tam o'Shanter crossed, Kirk Alloway, Burns's Cottage, across the Doon; surrounded by every Phantasy of green in Tree, Meadow, and hill. — The stream of the Doon, as a Farmer told us, is covered with trees 'from head to foot' — you know these beautiful heaths so fresh against the weather of a summer's evening. . . ." — *John Keats,* Amy Lowell, vol. II, page 46.

In the midst of which all day
The red sunlight lazily lay

Here, too, he was moving in the very scenes which Scott describes. If these things did not leave a direct mark upon his style, his foreign experiences must at least have enhanced and made vivid his future delving into the literature of Britain, amid scenes of which he had personal knowledge.

About thirty miles south of Irvine and Kilmarnock on the Cree Water,[108] in a country of beautiful private parks and small lochs, lived the Galts at a handsome estate called " Flowerbanks " that overlooked a charming prospect in the Cree Valley where the fishers could be seen drawing their nets. This is close to the " Bride of Lammermoor " country, and is one of the most charming sections of Scotland. The Allans visited their relatives here and evidently stayed for some little time with the family, which seems to have consisted of an Aunt, Mrs. Elizabeth Galt; William Galt and his wife, " Cousin Jane "; and the orphans, four or possibly three Galt boys, — for Thomas seems to have gone to sea. Here doubtless Poe played about the country with these children, with whom he had ample time to become intimate then and later on, amid scenes the charm of which could not have been wasted, even upon his extreme youth. This was probably in the late Summer of 1815.[109]

" Flowerbanks," however, was not the only place visited by the Allans. From Kilmarnock the family went to visit in Greenock, and from thence to Glasgow and Edinburgh. Mr. Allan doubtless combined his business and pleasure at these places,[110] but he was accompanied by his family and little Edgar Poe, who certainly could not have been oblivious to the attraction of strange sights for young eyes. Whether all of the Galt orphans went along is uncertain, but it is known that one of them, James

[108] A river between Wigton and Kirkudbrightshire in Scotland. The description of " Flowerbanks " is from a letter of Mary Allan, who says, " I could be happy to live here forever."

[109] As late as December 30, 1846, Poe wrote one A. Ramsay of Stonehaven, Scotland, inquiring after *his* (Poe's) Allan and Galt relatives.

[110] Charles Denny was the Glasgow merchant with whom Mr. Allan transacted much of his business.

Galt, then about fifteen years old, was of the company, and to his later reminiscences we are indebted for the facts. This nephew, it seems, was a favorite of old William Galt in Richmond who to some extent kept a tab on John Allan through the boy's letters.[111]

It had been John Allan's intent to leave Edgar at school at Irvine during this pleasure trip, and upon his return to England, but both Mrs. Allan and Miss Valentine objected, an attitude ably seconded by young Poe himself, so that it was agreed to allow Edgar to make the Scotch "grand tour" and return to London with the ladies, provided he would go back to Scotland later to attend school at Irvine with young James Galt. This early rift in the family over Edgar's care and whereabouts is not without significance as it shows plainly that Mrs. Allan was still the main protagonist for the boy, while her husband was anxious to settle matters, even then, by packing him off to school, a device to which he was to resort later on when the household became divided over more important matters in Richmond.

In the Fall, the family returned to England, stopping at Newcastle and Sheffield on the way, and landing in London on October 7, 1815. Here was another sea voyage, part of the way, amid notable scenery, at a time when Poe was beginning to awaken to himself and the world about him. It may have been that he saw Ailsa Rock glimmering far out at sea of which Keats wrote about the same time:

> . . . thou art dead asleep;
> Thy life is but two dead eternities —
> The last in air, the former in the deep;
> First with the whales, last with eagle skies —

These coasts seem to have affected the sea poetry of Keats, and it is certain that much of the poetry of Poe deals with a craggy and mist-veiled region.

The Allans did not immediately find lodgings, but, upon their arrival at London, stopped at *Blake's Hotel,* where on October 10, 1815, John Allan wrote Charles Ellis that they had arrived three days before from Glasgow, and that their satisfaction with

[111] J. H. Whitty, *Complete Poems,* large edition, Appendix, page 202.

the Scottish sights was, "high in all respects." A few days later they found a satisfactory residence in Russell Square, on the present site of the *Bedford* and *West Central Hotels*. From here on October 15, 1815, John Allan writes that he is sitting before "a snug fire in a nice little sitting parlor in No. 47, Southampton Row, while Frances and Nancy are sewing and Edgar is reading a little story book." How we should like to know what it was! Evidently Edgar read a good deal even at seven years of age.

Sometime later, probably about the end of 1815, Poe returned with James Galt to Scotland to attend once more the grammar school at Irvine.[112] Edgar, it seems, was very unwilling to part with the family and the women folks pled to keep him in London, but in vain. Poe's character even at this time began to manifest its wilful characteristics. James Galt says that on the voyage back from London to Irvine, Edgar made "an unceasing fuss all the way." Young Poe had started for Scotland very unwillingly, and he evidently intended to let the world know the state of his feelings.

At Irvine, Edgar Poe and James Galt lived with Mary Allan, John Allan's sister, while the two boys went to school. The house where they stayed, called the Bridgegate House, was till lately still standing. There, James Galt and the young Edgar Poe occupied the same room, and from the lips of the older boy we begin to get a definite impression of young Israfel. He was, it seems, very mature for his age, full of old-fashioned talk, filled with a great self-reliance and absolutely devoid of fear. Life with "Aunt Mary" and at the Academy did not suit him, and he made "plans" to go back to America, perhaps with Catherine in mind, or to run away to London, probably back to his dear "Ma," and "Aunt Nancy," but certainly not back to his dear "Pa," who had so nonchalantly packed him off from all those he loved. This is the first of Edgar's many plans to run away, and in a little lad of seven or eight years at most, it shows a spirit of adventure, self-confidence and obstinancy that is to be remarked. Evidently "Aunt Mary Allan," who, from her letters, seems to have been a kindly and knowing person, had a rapid time of it with the fiery little boy storming about her quiet old house.

In the canny and dour atmosphere of the Scotch village, Poe undoubtedly missed the note of gaiety and the warm, generous influences of his Richmond home. Frequent services at the Irvine and Kilmarnock kirks were long and lugubrious; the discipline at the Academy, a school with medieval traditions, was strict and probably corporeal; one of the exercises in writing was the copying of epitaphs from the old graves in the kirkyard close by, and there was doubtless no lack of "*auld licht*" sermons by Dr. Robertson, to the accompaniment of frequent reversals of the hour glass, — all the atmosphere of Protestant piety which had so outraged Burns a few years earlier. Indeed, in the very square with the Allan house at Irvine, was Templeton's book shop where Burns had gone to turn over many a sheet of old songs.[112]

There were mitigating circumstances, however; visits to Allan Fowlds, the merry nurseryman, and his family at Kilmarnock a few miles away; games in Nelson Street with Jock Gregory and Willie Anderson, who, as an old man in 1887, recalled Edgar Poe as, much fussed over by the Allans, and a lively apt youngster with a will of his own; — and there was a ghost-walk just opposite in the garden of Lord Kilmarnock's mansion which the lord's lady was said to haunt.

Certainly Edgar was restless, and much affected the old, red, creaking-wheeled riding carts of the country upon which he rode gaily beside the driver; a little grey-eyed, dark, curly-headed boy dressed in a green duffle apron and thick-napped, red Kilmarnock tam o'shanter, — drinking in the strange sights of the old Scotch villages all about — but still making trouble for "Aunty Mary." She, at last, poor soul, could stand it no longer, and in a burst of exasperation packed up his clothes and shipped him back to London,[112] doubtless to the annoyance of John Allan, and the rapturous kisses of "Ma" and "Aunt Nancy." James Galt seems to have gone with him, for, not long after, there are letters to Richmond from the former. Mrs. Allan was very fond of

[112] For the facts detailed here I am for the most part frankly indebted to the excellent *Memoir* of Poe by J. H. Whitty, large edition, section VI, Appendix, pages 201–209. Also to the illuminating article in the *Dial* for February, 1916, by Prof. Killis Campbell, and to extracts from the *Ellis & Allan Papers*.

these Galt children, too, and in October, 1818, the curtain lifts on the little family for a brief glimpse, when Mrs. Galt of " Flowerbanks " writes to John Allan in London, and encloses a message to his good wife.

Oct. 24, 1818

. . . Tell Mrs. Allan that her attention and great kindness to my children can never be forgotten as in every letter they are extolling her goodness. . . . My kind love to Miss Valentine and if she is half as good as she is represented to me she must be everything that anyone would wish. Compliments to Mrs. A., Miss V., little Edgar and Jane. . . .

Your affectionate Aunt
ELIZABETH GALT [113]

This letter is interesting as supplying the names of the persons in John Allan's household in London, and is one of the many proofs of the love for children shown by Frances Allan. " Jane " is John Allan's own sister.

There is an earlier glimpse than this, though, some two years before. Edgar could not have remained very long at Irvine, for he seems to have returned early in 1816 to London where a letter reached him written from Richmond in the Spring. It was from his little sweetheart Catherine Potiaux, Mrs. Allan's godchild. As the first of the many love letters that Poe received, and from a little girl seven or eight years old, now dead for nearly a century, it is not without a quaint interest of its own.

Richmond, 18, 1816

. . . Give my love to Edgar and tell him I want to see him very much. . . . I expect Edgar does not know what to make of such a large City as London, tell him Josephine and all the children want to see him. . . .[114]

Evidently Edgar *was* missed and remembered!

Upon his return to London in 1816, Poe was sent to the Misses

[113] The extracts from this letter of Mrs. Galt to John Allan have been supplied the author by the kindness of Mr. Edward V. Valentine of Richmond, who has the correspondence in his possession.

[114] *Ellis & Allan Papers,* Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.

Dubourg's [115] boarding school at 146, Sloane Street, Chelsea, not far from the South Kensington Museum, where he continued to live, making short visits to the family, probably until the end of the Spring of 1817 or later. The Misses Dubourg were the sisters of a clerk in the employ of *Ellis & Allan* during 1816 and 1817, but of them little is known. The record of Poe's life at this school is now confined to the following bill for tuition, which tells a rather complete story for such a document. Among other things we learn that Edgar was known as "Master Allan."

Masr. Allan's School Acct. to Midsummer 1816

Board & Tuition ¼ year	7	17	6
Separate Bed	1	1	0
Washing	0	10	6
Seat in Church	0	3	0
Teachers and Servants	0	5	0
Writing	0	15	0
Do. Entrance	0	10	0
Copy, Books, Pens, etc., etc.	0	3	0
Medicine, School Expenses	0	5	0
Repairing Linen, shoe strings etc.	0	3	0
Mavor's Spelling	0	2	0
Fresnoy's Geography	0	2	0
Prayer Book	0	3	0
Church Catechism Explained	0	0	9
Catechism of Hist. of England	0	0	9
	12	2	0

Receipted, July 6, 1816
sgd. GEORGE DUBOURG

On the back we find that, "School recommences Monday the 22nd of July." [116]

During the stay of the family in England there are several mentions of Mrs. Allan's being in ill health, a more or less chronic condition, judging by other frequent references in family correspondence of later date, that was to play a considerable part

[115] "Pauline Dubourg" is the laundress in the *Murders in the Rue Morgue.*

[116] This receipt has been published in the *Dial* for February, 1916, and is to be found in the *Ellis & Allan Papers,* Washington, D. C. Courtesy of Prof. Killis Campbell.

in the relations later between Edgar Poe and John Allan. In a letter written to his uncle in Richmond as early as 1816, John Allan specifically states that his wife is in poor health. The earliest mention of any letters of Poe occurs in connection with his foster-mother's illness. In August, 1817, John Allan took his wife Frances to Chettingham where she seems to have improved, and on August 14 of that year he writes his bookkeeper George Dubourg in London, enclosing a letter from the boy, and saying that if Edgar, who was evidently left behind at school, wishes to write at all he must send his letters to his mama, "as I do not think she will return with me." Mrs. Allan, finding the waters of benefit, wished to give them a longer trial. Why John Allan should have returned the letter is not clear unless it was to place it in the office files (sic). In any event it appears he did not wish to receive the boy's communications. Such incidents as these would be trivial did they not show definitely from which direction the warm and cold winds blew, even as early as this.[117]

In the Summer of 1817 about the time that Edgar left the Misses Dubourgs' school, John Allan moved from 47, Southampton Row to what is now number 83. This house was still standing in 1915, and is the same one that Poe mentions in *Why the Little Frenchman Wears his Hand in a Sling,* as "39, Southampton Row, Russell Square, Parish o' Bloomsbury." [557] Here they remained till shortly before they left London.

While in that city, John Allan had his place of business at 18 Basing Hall,[118] under the name of *Allan & Ellis,* a reversal of style that is said not to have pleased his partner at home. Most of his business was with Thomas S. Coles, and A. Saltmarsh, his "inspectors," and with the firm of John Gilliat & Co. His affairs did not prosper, and that certain other worries followed him overseas, this rather snappy glimpse of home correspondence not without direct interest in itself, and bearing directly upon Poe, will testify. The letter is from William Erwin, Edgar's former

[117] The full text of Allan's letter is in the Valentine Museum, Richmond, Virginia, and a quotation from it is given in the *Valentine Museum Poe Letters* (published in 1925), on page 17, introduction.

[118] From addresses in letters to John Allan at that date. Also Mary Newton Stanard to the author on August 21, 1925.

schoolmaster in Richmond, which reached Mr. Allan in London March 7, 1818.

Richmond, Novr. 27th, 1817

Dr. Sir

I take upon myself the liberty of writing to you this note, relative to Master Edward Collier, whom you placed under my tuition in the spring of the year 1815 and who has regularly attended my school since that period. His mother informs me that she has frequently reminded your partner Mr. Ellis to mention Edward's situation to you, but thinks that amid the hurry of important communications he had omitted the subject altogether. She has accordingly solicited me to write to you, and to present a statement of Edward's account from his first entrance to the end of the year. It is as follows;

Mr. Allan	To Wm Erwin, Dr.	
For Master Edward Collier's tuition from March 15th 1815 to March 14 1818 at $42 per annum		$126.00
Cr. June 1815 by cash from Mr. Allan	$12.25	
Oct. 1816 by cash from Mr. Ellis	$29.75	42.00
	To Balance	84.00

Thus there will be a balance due me of $84 on the 14th of March next — You will confer a favor on me, and equally so on Mrs. Collier, by dropping a few lines to me through the medium of your firm, first opportunity, expressive of your concern for the tuition and education of the above child, as far as you may deem proper in regard to the future. It is proper here also to add, that no improper step was taken by me, or any call made on any of your friends here for the payment of my bill, but on Mr. Ellis, who informed me, that some teacher had warranted the firm of *Ellis and Allan,* which induced him to refer any claims of this sort to your own inspection — I mention this, lest you might have imagined it to have been done by me.

I trust Edgar continues to be well and to like his school as much as he used to when he was in Richmond. He is a charming boy and it will give me great pleasure to hear how he is, and where you have sent him to school, and also what he is reading. There is no news here at present. . . . Poor Potter ended his earthly joy and miseries last week, so also died. L. Joseph and Miles L., the latter was found dead by his own door supposed to have fallen in drink and to have expired under the consequences. . . . Let me only beg of you to remember me re-

spectfully to your Lady Mrs. Allan and her Sister who I hope are well and do not forget to mention me to their august attendant, Edgar.

I am, etc.,

WILLIAM ERWIN

To this, in a somewhat less merry mood, John Allan replies,

London March 21, 1818

Mr. WILLIAM ERWIN

SIR —

I received your favor of the 27th Nov. last post the "Albert" that arrived here on the 7th inst having your account for the education of Edwin Collier . . . which sum Mr. Ellis will pay you; but I cannot pay any more expense on account of Edwin, you will therefore not consider me responsible for any expenses after the 15th of the month.

I cannot conceive who had a right to warrant *Ellis and Allan* on my account.

Accept my thanks for the solicitude you have so kindly expressed about Edgar & the family, Edgar is a fine Boy and I have no reason to complain of his progress.

I am etc.

JOHN ALLAN [119]

Mr. Allan's solicitude for his progeny was evidently in inverse ratio to their distance. But we do not hear what Edgar is reading which would, indeed, have been an interesting thing to know.

Probably in the Fall of 1817,[120] Poe was entered at the Manor House School of the Reverend "Dr." Bransby at Stoke Newington, then a suburb of London, which still retained the separate identity and the antique atmosphere of an old English village. The Academy was exclusively for young gentlemen, of the fairly well-to-do, and it was here that the young poet laid the first firm

[119] Both of these letters are from the *Ellis & Allan Correspondence,* Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.

[120] The reasons for supposing this date, are arrived at by the dates of correspondence and the fact that the Allans were in Scotland during most of 1815. In 1816, when they seem to have returned to London, Poe first attended the Misses Dubourg's school and would probably remain for the full term. This would bring his entry at the Stoke Newington Academy to some time in 1817. Poe afterward spoke of a "five years' schooling in England." The "year" at Irvine, a year with the Misses Dubourg, and three years with "Dr." Bransby covers this satisfactorily as to the time elapsed. The Allans sailed for home in the late Spring of 1820.

basis for an education.[121] He was now upwards of ten years of age and entering upon that period of life when the lineaments of character begin to make themselves visible and reflect most forcibly the modelling of environment.

From Poe's own lips in the strange autobiographical and tragic story of *William Wilson* we have the poet's confession that in the old school at Stoke Newington began one of those spiritual struggles in the personality of a genius, the results of which have become significant to literature. Both the school itself and its haunted surroundings were well calculated to stir his imaginings, and despite his extreme youth, the capacity of the boy to be moved by it cannot be doubted. "In childhood I must have felt with the energy of a man what now I find stamped upon my memory as the *exergues* of the Carthaginian medals" — this was written years later about his school days at Stoke Newington —, and "*Oh, le bon temps que ce siècle de fer,*" says Poe, sighing in nostalgic retrospect in spite of the shadow of loneliness which he claimed had been cast upon him!

In 1818 the ancient village of Stoke Newington which has since been absorbed by the growth of London, was a dream-like and spirit-soothing place, "a misty village of Old England," as Poe recalled it, rambling along an old Roman road bordered with a vast number of gnarled elm trees and ancient houses dating from the days of the Tudors. "At this moment," he says, writing many years later, "I feel the refreshing chilliness of its deeply-shadowed avenues, inhale the fragrance of its thousand shrubberies, and thrill anew with indefinable delight, at the deep, hollow note of the churchbell, breaking, each hour, with sudden and sullen roar, upon the stillness of the dusky atmosphere in which the fretted Gothic steeple lay imbedded and asleep." It does not, therefore, seem to be straining things too far to say that from this ancient place steeped in the memories of a millennium, where objective reminders of the past still lingered so romantically, some of the foreign coloring, the minute descriptions

[121] The Academy stood on the northeast corner of Church Street and what is now Edwards Lane, Prof. Lewis Chase in the *London Athenaeum* for May, 1916, pages 221–222.



The Grammar School at Irvine, Scotland

Which Poe attended for several months in 1815

From a pen and ink sketch. Courtesy of R. L. McTavish



The Manor House School at Stoke Newington

London, England

Which Poe attended from 1817 to 1820. *From an old print*

of ancient buildings, and the love for the "Gothic" and medieval atmosphere, in which he so often revelled later, may have originated.

For just off the village green among deeply shaded walls stood the ancient house of that Earl Percy who was the unfortunate lover of Anne Boleyn, and the mansion of Queen Elizabeth's noble favorite, the great Earl of Leicester. To the west of the little open square, green, shady lanes melted into the cool and misty meadows, while the school itself was situated on the east of the town on a quaint street of Queen Anne and Georgian houses, "haunts of ancient peace," carpeted about with darkly-shaded English lawns and bordered by hedges. Behind its own box bordered parterre, on this very street, stood the Manor House Academy, a large, white, rambling mansion of various architectures, with a roof that sloped away in the rear to a massive brick wall pierced by ponderous, iron-studded gates. One cannot do better than to let Edgar Poe himself describe it and the life he led there:

The house I have said was old and irregular. The grounds were extensive, and a high and solid brick wall, topped with a bed of mortar and broken glass, encompassed the whole. This prison-like rampart formed the limit of our domain; beyond it we saw but thrice a week — once every Saturday afternoon, when, attended by two ushers, we were permitted to take brief walks in a body through some of the neighboring fields — and twice during Sunday, when we were paraded in the same formal manner to the morning and evening service in the one church of the village. Of this church the principal of our school was pastor. With how deep a spirit of wonder and perplexity was I wont to regard him from our remote pew in the gallery, as, with step solemn and slow, he ascended the pulpit! This reverend man, with countenance so demurely benign, with robes so glossy and so clerically flowing, with wig so minutely powdered, so rigid and so vast, — could this be he who, of late with sour visage, and in snuffy habiliments, administered, ferule in hand, the Draconian Laws of the academy? Oh, gigantic paradox, too utterly monstrous for solution! At an angle of the ponderous wall frowned a more ponderous gate. It was riveted and studded with iron bolts, and surmounted with jagged iron spikes. What impressions of deep awe did it inspire! It was never opened save for the three periodical egressions and ingressions already mentioned; then, in every creak of its mighty hinges, we found a plentitude of

mystery — a world of matter for solemn remark, or for more solemn meditation. The extensive enclosure was irregular in form, having many capacious recesses. Of these, three or four of the largest constituted the playground. It was level, and covered with fine hard gravel. I well remember it had no trees, nor benches, nor anything similar within it. Of course it was in the rear of the house. In front lay a small parterre, planted with box and other shrubs; but through this sacred division we passed only upon rare occasions indeed — such as a first advent to school or final departure thence, or perhaps, when a parent or friend having called for us, we joyfully took our way home for the Christmas or Midsummer holidays. But the house! — how quaint an old building was this! — to me how veritably a palace of enchantment! There was really no end to its windings — to its incomprehensible subdivisions. It was difficult at any given time, to say with certainty upon which of its two stories one happened to be. From each room to every other there were sure to be found three or four steps either in ascent or descent. Then the lateral branches were innumerable — inconceivable — and so returning in upon themselves, that our most exact ideas in regard to the whole mansion were not very far different from those with which we pondered upon infinity. During the five years of my residence here, I was never able to ascertain with precision, in what remote locality lay the little sleeping apartment assigned to myself and some eighteen or twenty other scholars. The school room was the largest in the house — I could not help thinking, in the world. It was very long, narrow, and dismally low, with pointed Gothic windows and a ceiling of oak. In a remote and terror-inspiring angle was a square enclosure of eight or ten feet, comprising the *sanctum,* ' during hours,' of our principal, the Reverend Dr. Bransby. It was a solid structure, with massy door, sooner than open which in the absence of the ' Dominie,' we would all have willingly perished by the *peine forte et dure.* In other angles were two other similar boxes far less reverenced, indeed, but still greatly matters of awe. One of these was the pulpit of the ' classical ' usher, one of the ' English and mathematical.' Interspersed about the room, crossing and recrossing in endless irregularity, were innumerable benches and desks, black, ancient, and time-worn, piled desperately with much-bethumbed books, and so beseamed with initial letters, names at full length, grotesque figures, and other multiplied efforts of the knife, as to have entirely lost what little of original form might have been their portion in days long departed. A huge bucket with water stood at one extremity of the room, and a clock of stupendous dimensions at the other.[122]

[122] The quotations descriptive of Poe's school days are from his story *William Wilson.*

This description, however, is not to be taken too literally. It is quite possibly a synthesis of both Irvine and Stoke Newington, and in one particular quite misleading, — the description of the headmaster, Dr. Bransby.[123]

In the first place the good man was not a " Doctor " at all, or so only by courtesy. He appears on his bills as the " Rev^{d}. John Bransby." Nor was he " old " when Poe was at his school, being at that time, 1817, only 33 years of age. The Reverend John Bransby was an M. A. of St. John's College, Cambridge. He seems to have been a merry, Tory clergyman with a large family and convivial habits, very fond of field sports; the cleaning of his gun was a signal to the boys that he was off for the day. " He was a classical scholar of no mean stamp possessing a large fund of miscellaneous information, both literary and scientific . . . and combined an enthusiastic love of nature with an extensive knowledge of Botany," and gardening. " Dr." Bransby wrote political pamphlets and looked upon the days at Stoke Newington as " a bright spot in his life." He was much beloved by his scholars.

These facts give us quite a different picture, indeed, from that drawn by Poe in *William Wilson*. John Bransby in after years was said to have been considerably nettled by the use of his name in the story, and to have been quite reticent about Poe, remarking, only, that he had liked the boy, who went under the name of " Allan," but that his parents spoilt him by allowing him too much pocket money. " Allan," he said, " was intelligent, wayward, and wilful," which testimony agrees with James Galt's.

Of Poe's associations with his schoolmates nothing definite is known. We have his own statement, however, to the effect that, even thus early, his dominant characteristic of pride began to make itself felt. " The ardor, the enthusiasm, and the imperious-

[123] The description of Poe's schoolmaster, the Reverend John Bransby is taken from the *London Athenaeum* No. 4605 for May, 1916, pages 221–222, an article by Prof. Lewis Chase, part of which is quoted. In this connection note that the pictures in several biographies of Poe purporting to be those of " Dr." Bransby are in reality a likeness of Dr. William Cooke, a rector of Stoke Newington who died when Bransby was thirteen years old. John Bransby was born in 1784 and died March 5, 1857.

ness of my disposition, soon rendered me a marked character among my schoolmates, — gave me an ascendency over all not greatly older than myself." Master Erwin, his former Richmond schoolmaster, had desired himself to be remembered to the "august" Edgar, so that there is some confirmation of the statement. Pride is not a trait that would have tended to make him companionable, and it is probable that much of the complained-of loneliness sprang from this. There is also some indication that the boys revenged themselves upon him for his overbearing attitude by an annoying repetition of his name which probably, from the Southern twist of his Virginian accent, gave them ample opportunity for a rather obvious and humble pun upon his patronymic.[124] The results upon his diction of a long residence in England and Scotland, and of the Scotch dialect so frequently heard in his foster-father's house are not to be overlooked.

Bills from the Manor House School rendered for "Master Allan," which have recently come to light,[125] give us the only direct insight to the life of the schoolboy, Edgar Poe, at Stoke Newington that we possess. From these it appears that like other lads he played hard, and was ruthless on shoe leather. A pair of shoes evidently lasted him a month, by which time they went on the docks for repairs. The total bill for the summer term of 1818, it appears, was £1. 15s. 6d. which includes two new pairs, three mendings, and no less than six shillings worth of laces consumed in that period! For the rest, Poe's memoirs of the Reverend John Bransby's sermons in *William Wilson* are confirmed, and we learn in addition that the boys were charged extra for listening to them, as John Allan is billed 3s. 6d. for pew-rent, and a charity sermon for Edgar's share. Poe had a single bed at this school, as he had at the Misses Dubourg's, and for "board and education" was charged £23. 12s. 6d. a term. He took dancing as an extra at £2. 2s., and had the services of a "hairdresser"

[124] David Poe was listed on the tax returns in Boston for 1809 as "David Poo," with taxables of $300 in personable property.

[125] *Valentine Museum Poe Letters,* Bills from Reverend John Bransby to John Allan for "Master Allan," see pages 319–327.

or barber for 2s. a term. The school allowance of pocket money it seems was 5s. the term, which, as it is certainly not the "extravagant amount" that "Dr." Bransby mentions, must have been supplemented by "dear Ma," and "Aunt Nancy." On August 31, 1818, he seems to have hurt his hand somewhat badly, for his foster-father is charged with an item 10s. 6d. for having it dressed, and 2s. 6d. for ointment and lint a month later. The boy is charged with two large slates, but there is no mention of school texts by title. The whole cost for the term at this excellent English school came to £33. 2s. 11d. By January 25, 1819, Poe was back at school from the Christmas holidays which he must have spent with the Allans in London, for at that date the vacation came to an end.

Unfortunately, then, we do not know what, if any, were the books that Edgar may have read at Stoke Newington. Master Erwin's inquiry shows that he was reading. There must have been something more than mere text books about the school somewhere, although English grammar schools of the period were amazingly innocent of anything but the dog-eared Latin grammars, spellers, cheap editions of Homer, Vergil, and Caesar, and the ponderous arithmetics of the period. Whether the boys ever went to the theater is doubtful, although Edgar probably saw the sights of London with his "mother" during the holidays, — the Tower and Westminster, at least, and perhaps the Elgin Marbles, then newly arrived.

Let the searchers for the literary inspirations of Poe's boyhood make the most of the fact that he was in London at school when the first edition of *Christabel* and *Kubla Khan* appeared from John Murray's; but it is not likely that any of this magic fell upon his ears until years later. That was "modern poetry" then, and so we may be sure taboo in the schools where Pope still reigned. "Byron" was a thing for young gentlemen ushers to chuckle over in a knowing way, and conceal from the innocent eyes of their charges. As for Shelley, if he were known at all, to any of the faculty at Stoke Newington, what chance would the works of an avowed atheist have under the watchful, churchly eye of the Reverend and forceful "Dr." Bransby? That Poe was

in the same city at the time when Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Keats were meeting about the same fire with Haydon, is a temporal and geographic fact without literary significance, despite the attempt to make it so from some quarters.[126]

On Christmas, mid-term holidays, and week-ends Edgar must have visited the Allans at their London lodgings. One thing is certain, John Allan is not likely to have become acquainted with any of the literary figures of the day. The Virginia tobacco trade and the social circle which it implies, cannot by the wildest stretch of imagination be advanced as a source for even juvenile literary inspirations or associations. If Edgar saw anyone at his guardian's house while in London, besides the immediate members of his family, they were probably merchants who had business with the firm and discussed, in a broad lowland accent, the prices current of Virginia leaf, or the vicissitudes of American ships. Mrs. Allan, however, seems to have gathered about her a more congenial and interesting group, for, while Edgar was at school, Mrs. Allan, whose health continued to be precarious, traveled about from place to place, in company with Jane Galt and others, as a letter from Damlish written by Miss Galt to "Miss (Mary) Allan" at 38, Southampton Row, Russell Square, London, on October 24, 1818, shows. At that time Mrs. Allan did not intend to return to London till November.

. . . I think she regrets leaving this part of the country. Mr. Dunlop has been persuading her to remain for some time — he will leave her in charge of the beaus (army officers) who winter here, Major Court and Captain Donnal who she is sure will take good care of her and he would take a nice little cottage for her. What do you think of that arrangement? Don't you think we plan very well. Mrs. Allan drank

[126] Owing the the fact that John Galt, the Scotch novelist, and a friend of Byron, hailed from Irvine and Kilmarnock and was a connection of the Galt family, cousins to the Allans, some attempt has been made to connect Poe's foster-parents with the literary life of the London of the time. There is not a shadow of proof, however, on which to rest the assumption. John Galt *was*, however, in London at the same time as the Allans. The following *occurs* in a letter from Byron to John Murray dated Bologna, September 17, 1819.

"Dear Sir: — I have received a small box consigned by you to a Mr. Allan with three portraits in it." — etc. *The Works of Byron*, edited by Rowland E. Prothero, M. A., John Murray, London, 1900, page 353.

tea last evening at Mr. Dunlops. They leave this Monday. Mr. Leslie who has been with them for some time is quite delighted with the country. He has been very busy taking views of the different places around. Mrs. Allan is much about the same as when I wrote, I regret often that we have not you all here to enjoy the beauties of Devonshire. . . . There is one view here which reminds me very much of the first look you get at Ayrshire from —— . . . accept our best regards to Miss Valentine and Mr. Allan. . . .

By which it would seem that Edgar's "Aunt Nancy" kept house in London, while his invalid foster-mother was in Devonshire, assisted by one of John Allan's sisters. A little glimpse into the family circle of ever a century ago in England is thus afforded. Evidently Edgar was then well tucked away at "Dr. Bransby's."

Leslie, the artist referred to, was E. C. R. Leslie, R. A., who was born in London of American parents in 1784. His parents returned to America and he was later a student at the Royal Academy, exhibiting there the year this letter was written. He later returned to America and became professor of drawing at West Point. It is just possible that Leslie who was in close touch with the Allans painted a portrait of "Master Allan" in England.[127]

The references to Mrs. Allan's constant ill health continue steadily in nearly all the correspondence from now on until she died over a decade later in Richmond.

Before leaving England, John Allan's affairs were in bad shape and generally complicated. The tobacco market was poor, and he had adventured considerably with a merchant by the name of William Holder who writes in January, 1820:

I cannot express my dear Sir what I feel at this moment for your *kind, humane* & feeling conduct toward me & my two unprovided daughters at present I can only offer you my sincere *thanks*. . . . It would be the proudest hour of my life to make you ample restitution . . . etc.

[127] The letter from Jane Galt and the reference to Leslie came from Edward V. Valentine, Esq., of Richmond, Virginia, from his diary, and from letters given him to copy by Miss Sallie Galt on July 12, 1915, from the Galt-Allan correspondence.

In March, Mr. Allan was attacked by a dropsy, of which he nearly died, and he was not able to get to the counting house until April 3rd to wind up his affairs. He found that in the meantime he had been robbed by a clerk by the name of Tayle, and gives the details in a letter to Charles Ellis marked "private," in which he adds, London, April 18th, 1820:

Would say we are all tolerably well, I certainly am much better, Frances complaining a good deal & Ann & Edgar are quite well. . . .

The final crash financially came over the confusion between *Ellis & Allan* in Richmond and *Allan & Ellis* in London, both of which firms tried to collect a sum of £2700 due from the estate of a Mr. Guilles of Glasgow, debtor to William Galt. Gravely in debt and cast down by his failure, Mr. Allan rented his household effects, and house (for he hoped to return), took Edgar out of school, and prepared to depart for America. Had he been successful, Edgar Poe would have been raised in England. On May 20th, Mr. Allan writes home from London:

. . . I trust to be off by the June Packet & when I arrive I shall use every exertion of which I am capable to complete our engagements to our creditors. . . . Mrs. Allan is in better health than usual, Ann quite well & so is Edgar, as for myself I was never better. . . . The arrival of the Queen produced an immense sensation. Few thought she would return, but the bold & courageous manner by which she appeared . . . has induced a vast number to think her not guilty. She was received with immense acclamation & the populace displaced her horses, drew her past Carlton House and thence to Alderman Wood's House South Audley St. The same day the King made a communication to the House of Lords charging her with High Treason. . . .

From which it is quite plain that Edgar Poe, just before he left England, probably saw the unfortunate Queen Caroline drawn through the London Streets. It was probably his first and last glimpse of royalty, and his last of London.

On June 9th we find the family at Liverpool where they arrived the day before, waiting for the Packet.

(Mrs. Allan) . . . felt much indisposed. I hope the trip to Virginia (?) will be of service to her, she has yet to learn what a pleasing sensation is experienced on returning Home — Even in verry Hot weather.

We will trust to God that our congratulations on the Birth of another Daughter to your family will be . . . finally realized . . . make my best respects to our dear Margaret (Mrs. Ellis) & all the children. Mrs. A. & Ann desire their love to you, Margaret & the young ones. Remember us all to Mr. and Mrs. Richard, Doct. and Mrs. Thornton, the children, Rose (Poe), Mr. and Mrs. Mackenzie. . . . Mrs. Mackenzie of Forest Hill called and addressed her love to Mrs. Mackenzie, they are all well.

In a few days, apparently about the end of June, 1820, Mr. Allan and the family with young Edgar set sail for New York.

The net result of Poe's boyhood experience in England and Scotland seems to have been a precious store of rather distinct and romantic memories, a lively young body hardened by the sturdy games of the English school ground and climate, a little Latin, some mispronounced French, and an ability to work problems in simple arithmetic. Perhaps also, a too well developed self-confidence and boyish pride. In addition, young Poe had seen, long before most American youths, the beginnings of the age of industrialism, in England and Scotland, factories operated by steam, and the beginnings of railways.[128] His horizons had been widened, the provincialism of a Virginia-bred youth inoculated with a valuable antidote, and he had heard and been instructed in English spoken at the source.

In June, 1820, however, he left behind him forever the quaint English town, and the rambling mysterious corridors and alcoved dormitories of the old school where he had spent a considerable portion of his boyhood, to return with Mr. Allan and his family to the United States.

128 "Railways"—see a letter from Allan Fowlds written from Kilmarnock, Scotland, as early as January 4, 1812, to John Allan at Richmond, Virginia, in which Fowlds says, . . . "we are getting a fine new Harbor at the Troon with 3 or 4 fine dry docks, the railway from the Troon to Kilmarnock is almost completed, they are shipping great Quantity of Coals for Ireland"—etc. Steam engines were not used *there* at that time.

CHAPTER VI
Israfel Meets Helen

THE voyage from England to America was made in thirty-six days, a fairly average passage for the time. Mr. Allan and his family arrived in New York on July 21, 1820, accompanied by young James Galt, then about twenty years old, who came to Richmond apparently at the behest of his wealthy uncle there.[129]

Ships and the sea, which always have a fascination for boys of an adventurous turn, — and by this time Edgar was certainly that, — exercised a peculiar charm for young Poe if one can judge anything from his later stories, so many of which have their scenes laid in a maritime setting. Along with young Galt he would not have failed to take delight in the always-to-a-landsman novel incidents of a transatlantic voyage, and to have become somewhat familiar with the picturesque setting and life of the jack-tar on the sailing ships of the age. Nor could the busy life of the London and New York docks and water-fronts have been lacking in an appeal to his imagination.

A port of the early twenties of the nineteenth century, filled with the square-riggers, barks, Indiamen, Blackwall frigates, and men-of-war of the time, presented a romantic aspect even to contemporary eyes. Gleaming sails, black and yellow hulls careening to the wind, and painted with white stripes along the rows of square grinning port-holes, flashing brasses, bells and cannon, and the chanteys of sailors as the capstan clanked and the anchors walked home to the catheads, — would not have been waste material upon the retina of Edgar Poe even when only twelve years of age. A great full-rigged ship under all sail, with a "bone-in-her-teeth," graceful gilded figure-head and fluted

[129] Woodberry, 1909, vol. 1, page 24.
"Galt" — J. H. Whitty, large edition, Appendix, page 206.

stern galleries, home from the Indies with all her national bunting and house-flags flying, was a good thing for a young poet to see, something which has unfortunately perished from the earth.

Poe's sea stories, even the most fanciful, such as *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym,* exhibit a familiarity with nautical ways and terms which much actual experience at sea was the cause of supplying. Two transatlantic voyages before the age of manhood, and a life spent about the docks, and in seaports, was an unusual and valuable experience for one of the coming figures in American literature. In his voyages upon army transports from Boston to Charleston, and upon his return thence to Hampton Roads, Poe was at a later time to renew his direct acquaintance with the ocean for a considerable time.[130] The magic sights and sounds of the sea have been caught up into lines of his prose and poetry, notably in *Annabel Lee* and *The City in the Sea.* One can hardly quote even the titles without making the fact self-evident. In this, Poe has carried on one of the great traditions of English verse, the sea influence, and, that he was able to do so, is largely the happy result of experience rather than a literary *tour de force.*

The letters of Mr. Allan's partner, Charles Ellis, written from the new offices of the firm on 15th Street opposite the *Bell Tavern* (whither they had moved in September, 1817) to his wife, then in the mountains, afford an unusually intimate glimpse into the events upon the return of the Allans and young Poe to Richmond, and of the kind of a world with which young Israfel was about to renew a long broken tie.

It was a hot, fever-ridden community to which they were returning, with customs quite different than those current at Russell Square or Stoke Newington.

> Mr. Hughes of the house of Hughes & Armistead stabbed a Mr. Randolph son of Wm. Randolph of Cumberland the other night, at the time it was thought to be mortal, as the dirk punctuated the left side just above the hip to a considerable depth, but Dr. Nelson who attended him, tells me no unfavorable symptoms exist now. Mr. H. is out of town & perhaps will not return. . . .

[130] See Chapter XI.

Of the slaves working about the docks and ships in the sweltering summer weather, Mr. Ellis remarks June 27, 1820, shortly before the Allans returned:

. . . The Richmond gang look as if they would rather be at home, but all goes on very well except the elopement of that troublesome fellow Nelson who went off last Wednesday and has not been heard of since. He is one of the best hands for work I ever saw, but he vexes me exceedingly when he goes off, especially in busy times, little Bill goes about and does some light work, but still complains a good deal, Africas feet is nearly well and indeed I hear no complaining among any of the People except Caty's child, it is very poor. She says it is very sick. It has no fever nor complaint of the bowels. I fear it is neglected, I have sent it some chicken every day sence I have been up. . . .

So the days had been going on in the little town along the James to which the young Poe was returning to spend the rest of his boyhood and to become familiar with the life of a plantation founded community. On July 3rd Mr. Ellis writes his wife:

. . . Mr. and Mrs. Allan are at last arrived in New York, and as soon as they get on, and settle down a little I shall leave them the bag to hold, and flee to the mountains. . . . Mr. Allan would set out from New York last Friday via Norfolk and I suppose will be here on Friday or Saturday. Mrs. Allan was rather unwell & was resting. The rest was hearty, don't give yourself any uneasiness about my health. . . . The inhalation of the exhilirating nitric acid gas in this place has gained some amusement among the curious and idle, I have not seen or felt the effects.

The city is healthy, except for children teething, and many of them suffer greatly. . . .

CHARLES

The Allans with Miss Valentine and Edgar arrived at Richmond, after a voyage down the coast to Norfolk, on August 2nd, and went to stay at the house of Mr. Ellis as this letter shows.[131]

Richmond, August 7th, 1820

Your letter of the 4th inst. by last nights mail affords me great pleasure, and that of Mr. and Mrs. Allan who are at our home receiving the

[131] Also Woodberry, Weiss, etc.



The Home of Charles Ellis, partner of John Allan

Franklin and Second Streets, Richmond, Virginia

Here POE lived with his foster-parents a short while after returning from England in August, 1820. "The Enchanted Garden" was directly across the street from this house. This was one of POE's boyhood haunts

Courtesy of the Edgar Allan Poe Shrine, Richmond, Virginia

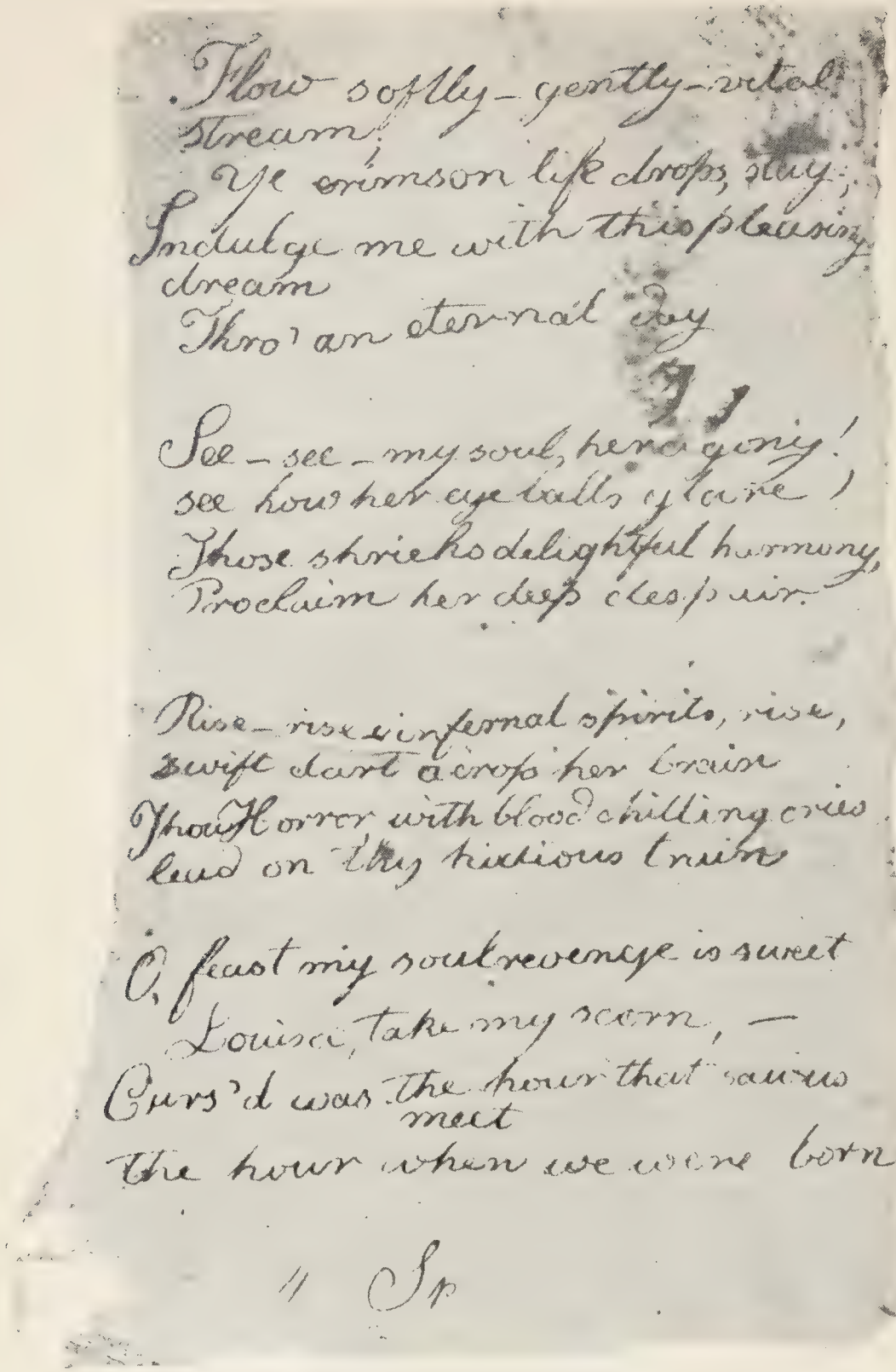


"The Mother's Chamber" in the Ellis House

Occupied by Frances Allan in 1820

Photograph 1877

Courtesy of the Edgar Allan Poe Shrine, Richmond, Virginia


Flow softly – gently – vital
Stream!
Ye crimson life drops, stay;
Indulge me with this pleasing
dream
Thro' an eternal day

See – see – my soul, here glory!
see how her eyeballs glare!
Those shrieks delightful harmony,
Proclaim her deep despair.

Rise – rise infernal spirits, rise,
swift dart across her brain
Thou Horror with blood chilling cries
lead on thy fiendious train

O, feast my soul revenge is sweet
Louisa, take my scorn, —
Curs'd was the hour that saw us
meet
The hour when we were born

A Sp

A Poem by Edgar Poe

Found in the 1822 files of *Ellis & Allan*

This poem, obviously in a childish hand, was found by Prof. Killis Campbell. The lines are not signed but are almost certainly Poe's. The treatment of the theme is characteristic. The poem may belong to the early "lost volume" mentioned by Poe's schoolmaster, J. W. CLARKE

Photostat supplied to the Library of Congress by Prof. Killis Campbell after original manuscript was lost

congratulations of their friends. Mrs. Allan could she be as even tempered and as accommodating as she has been sence her return, she would make the path through life much more even to herself. . . . I find Mr. Allan can't do much yet, it will take some time to obtain a knowledge of our affairs & he is engaged in seeing his old friends. Mr. and Mrs. Allan will continue at our home, they are all well but complain of the warm weather. . . .

On August 8th Robert S. Ellis writes to congratulate Mr. and Mrs. Allan upon their safe return, and on August 14th from Charles Ellis, in another letter to his wife, we learn that:

Our friends Mr. and Mrs. Allan, Nancy, and Edgar are very well & you would be surprised to see what health and color Mrs. A. has. They are quite well and satisfied at our house & make out pretty well altho not as well as you would do. They are a little Englishised but it will soon wear off. They talk of going to Stanton. . . .

Edgar Poe remained for the entire Summer at the Ellis house. "Nancy and Edgar stay well," says John Allan in September. He was now "holding the bag" in good earnest, and not very much in it — and goes on to gossip about cleaning up the old garden across the street, about an old slave who could work no more as her hip "seemed to be dislocated" . . . and prices current on tobacco. The old house on Tobacco Alley and 14th Street was still rented. Mr. Allan set about looking up a new house and secured one fronting West on Clay Street beyond old St. James Church. Nearby lived Dr. Ambler and Bishop Moore "right across on the corner from Clay Street." It was probably now that Edgar first took to swimming in Shockoe Creek with young Ambler, and to wandering about again with Ebenezer Burling, whose father Thomas printed the *Journal* of the State Senate. "Aunt" Nancy Valentine was a pleasant companion with a broad humorous face, good for a ramble with the boy out to the *Hermitage,* or for a game of chess with him when "Ma" was ill, or on rainy days sat sewing by her mahogany work stand. "Pa" was no longer so pleasant as in times past, even more stern than before. A great many things financial and domestic preyed upon his mind. Edgar began more and more to step over to the Mackenzies to see "Rose" and to play with Jack, to stay

at Burling's over night or with the Ellises. England seemed a dream, a new life had begun. Somehow he was already quite lonely and beginning to wonder about it all. Not long afterward he began to write poetry.

Richmond in the 1820's was a good place for a boy to live in. The meadows, streams, swamps, and forests around about were beautiful, and the valley of the James from Church Hill and the Bluffs, with the yellow river winding away into the distance, or dashing among the wooded islands at the Falls, would present to European eyes, perhaps, a magnificent spectacle, for it is at least five times as large as the Marne and several times greater than the Thames, — like the rest of America upon a continental scale.

The little capital of Virginia had, at that time, a population of about twelve thousand souls. The porches of its pillared churches and political buildings looked down, with a semi-classic stare from its hills, over Georgian houses set amid spacious gardens and green lawns. At its foot ran the key-like flanges of docks, and the black warehouses edged with a tangled fringe of masts, sails, and flags; while around the curve of Penitentiary Hill came gliding the canal boats drawn by tinkling bell-hung mules. Boys swam in the river and creeks; over the fields sounded the plantation bells, or the sonorous roar of the conch-bugle calling the slaves from the fields; the tobacco waved, — and the fortunes of the planters grew.

No community in America had retained more of its pre-revolutionary traditions than tide-water Virginia. It was the home of an aristocracy born in the great houses of gentlemen, surrounded by servants and family portraits, the life of a flourishing colony projected forward into another time.

Upon Poe's return to Richmond in 1820, save for the domestic chimneys, there could scarcely have been a smoke stack in the place.[132] Planters rode about the streets on blooded horses; the carriages of the local gentry whirled by with black coachman and footman; the governor, if he was so minded, and he often was, kept at least a provincial court; the legislature met, and great lawyers argued at the bar. There was a brilliant round of

[132] Many old prints of Richmond show this delightful condition.

social activities in which the Allans were soon to take their part, an intense local pride, a taste for the arts, and a respect for tradition and inherited rank. In all this, the young Edgar Poe moved and breathed, and had the roots of his being.

Immediately across from Mr. Ellis' house at Second and Franklin Streets there was then, and for many years later, a beautiful landscaped garden filled with lindens and the scent of winter-blooming roses. Amid its walls and nooks took place many of the incidents of one of the great romances of the poet's life, and it still flourishes in the lines which have fixed some of its scenes permanently upon the memories of men. But of that hereafter.[133]

The family did not remain very long with Mr. Ellis, but moved in the Autumn of 1820 into their new home,[134] where Edgar must have renewed with peculiar intensity many of the scenes of his earliest recollections, and greeted with mutual curiosity the now budding young ladies and gentlemen with whom he had played as a child.

One of these was Ebenezer Burling whom Poe had met at the Memorial Church. He resided with his widowed mother at a house in Bank Street, and seems to have played a not unimportant rôle in some of the major incidents of the poet's youth.[135] With Burling, Poe read *Robinson Crusoe* and the boys then had a boat on the James which seems to have been the genesis of the little pleasure yacht mentioned at the beginning of *Arthur Gordon Pym*. Burling, it is said, had previously taught Poe to swim.[136] In 1836 Poe wrote the *Southern Literary Messenger,* harking back to old " Robinson Crusoe days ":

> How fondly do we recur in memory to those enchanted days of our boyhood when we first learned to grow serious over Robinson Crusoe! — when we first found the spirit of wild adventure enkindling within us, as by the dim firelight we labored out, line by line, the marvelous import of those pages, and hung breathless and trembling with eager-

[133] See Chapter VIII.
[134] E. V. Valentine to the author, Richmond, July, 1925.
[135] J. H. Whitty *Memoir,* large edition, page XXIV.
[136] J. H. Whitty *Memoir,* large edition, page XXV.

ness over their absorbing — over their enchanting interest. Alas! the days of desolate islands are no more.

At any rate, the boys had many a lark together in "Richmond City" and the country about. A Mrs. C. E. Richardson afterward kept a tavern in Richmond which at one time sheltered Poe in a day of adversity, and Ebenezer, it is said, developed the drink habit early, which may have had some influence upon Poe in company with him there, but that was later on.[137] This Ebenezer Burling, or *Berling,* as it is sometimes spelled, was not a schoolmate of Poe but attended the school of one William Burns, a Scotch gentleman, who boarded at Parson Blair's house.[138]

If by some magic we could return to Richmond, Virginia, in the late Autumn of the early twenties after the harvest had been gathered, we might come across Edgar Allan Poe, a well-knit, broad-browed, curly-headed lad with astonishing long-lashed, deep grey eyes, seated with his best chums Jack Mackenzie, Rob Sully, little Bobby Stanard, and Robert Cabell upon a rail fence like so many crows, each munching a tender juicy turnip, or a raw sweet potato with a little salt on it, which, as many a Southern boy knows, is not half bad. On Saturdays there were fish-fries by the river and tramps through the luxuriant Virginia woods above the James after wild grapes and chinquepins.

Edgar was well to the forefront in all of this. Much of the delicate timidity of his baby days had been, superficially at least, cast off. The playgrounds of the schools at Irvine and Stoke Newington had made him an able runner and jumper,[139] and had given him the English schoolboy's technique and readiness in fisticuffs which must have compelled the respect of his companions and have enabled him to indulge to the full a merry propensity for practical jokes. At one time he appeared as a ghost in the middle of a late card party in Richmond at which General Winfield Scott was present. It is worthy of note that Jack Mackenzie, the foster-brother of Rosalie, who knew him

[137] J. H. Whitty *Memoir,* large edition, page XXIX.

[138] Information gathered from the *Ingram Papers.*

[139] There are several stories and authentic ones of Poe's powers as a runner and jumper.

extremely well, and saw him often in his own house where Rosalie Poe had been given refuge and tender care, remarked of him, "I never saw in him as boy or man a sign of morbidness or melancholy, unless it was when Mrs. Stanard ("Helen") died, when he appeared for some time grieving and oppressed. Aside from this, cards, raids on orchards and turnip patches, swimming in Shockoe Creek, and juvenile masquerades seem to have been the normal order of life.[140]

That there was another side, though, is abundantly evident from other accounts. The truth is, that even at this early date, Edgar Allan Poe began to develop that strange diversity, and the contradictory sides to his personality that have so puzzled and will long continue to intrigue the world. That he was a merry companion in minor ways, many of his little friends have left their testimony. But that he was also a lonely and sometimes a morbid little boy, already torn and troubled by the riddles of existence, the demands of an esthetic nature for the unattainable, and satisfactions not to be found in the objective life of his companions, is equally certain. We hear of long lonesome tramps, of attempts at juvenile self-expression with both the pen and brush, which only secrecy could save from the inevitable ridicule of boyhood and the ponderous misunderstanding of adults. He was much given to day-dreams and reveries, and to the plucking of flowers and the reading of books. Where the University of Richmond now stands was once a meadow where the young Israfel culled violets. These, with other "feminine" characteristics, must inevitably have relegated him to a world apart from men and little boys. It was the world of vision and of dear-bought dreams.

Considerable mention is made of Poe's enthusiasm for drawing, and there remains at least one drawing of his own hand, around which cluster the tenderest and saddest of memories. Poe seems always to have visualized with a keen eye for shadow and color, and with sufficient vividness to make him desire to reproduce his impressions. In this propensity he doubtless met

140 Mrs. Susan Archer Weiss in her *Home Life of Poe*, not always reliable, gives John Mackenzie's *own* account of the intimacy between Poe and himself.

some sympathy at the hands of young Robert Sully [141] who came of a family of artists, and became a creditable one himself in after life. From Sully one gets a softer and more endearing picture. Young Sully was somewhat delicate, and so sensitive and irritable that few of his companions could remain on good terms with him for long periods. In view of this, the little glimpse he gives us of Poe is doubly interesting. "I was a dull boy at school," Sully says, "and Edgar when he knew that I had an unusually hard lesson would help me with it. He would never allow the big boys to tease me, and was kind to me in every way. I used to admire and envy him, he was so bright, clever and handsome. He lived not far from me, just around the corner, and one Saturday he came running up to our house, calling out, 'Come along, Rob! We are going to the 'Hermitage Woods' for chinquepins, and you must come, too. Uncle Billy is going for a load of pine-needles, and we can ride in his wagon.'" In the shadow that soon falls over the life of this child of misfortune, the picture of the "bright" young Edgar and his little friend Rob rattling off with their childish arms around each other in Uncle Billy's old wagon, is like a gleam of sunlight across a somber landscape. In the future it was not often the clouds parted, even for so brief a glimpse as this. No wonder that later he was to look back upon these halycon days in Richmond as a Utopia of memory in which to take refuge from a cruel world.

That the friendship with the Sullys was a close one is shown by the fact that Robert's uncle, Thomas Sully, the well-known American artist, some time later made a miniature portrait of the young Poe, then at the beginning of his fame, in the attitude of one of the portraits of Byron.[142]

Immediately upon his returning to Richmond John Allan placed his foster-son in the English and Classical School of one Joseph H. Clarke, of Trinity College, Dublin, who has been described as a fiery, pompous, and pedantic Irishman, making his living by assuming the rôle of perceptor to the sons of the more

[141] Nephew of the American artist, Thomas Sully.

[142] The author has certain intelligence of the existence of this portrait but is not at liberty to divulge full information owing to the conditions of the owner.

fashionable families of Richmond.[143] Like most Irishmen, however, indications are not lacking that he possessed a softer and more genial side.

The curriculum was that of the old fashioned preparatory school of the day, a continuation of the Latin, French, and primary mathematics of the English Schools which Poe had already attended. In America, perhaps, there was even then some attempt at actually teaching the spoken language, and of reading some of its more classic literature, Johnson, Addison, Goldsmith or Pope. That Edgar was well advanced in Latin for a boy of his years, and that the cost of his education was not unduly heavy, this interesting receipt found among his foster-father's papers will testify:

Mr. JOHN ALLAN, *Dr.*

To present quarters tuition of

Master Poe from June 11th to Sept 11 — 1822 . . .	$12.50
1. Horace 3.50, Cicero de Off. 62½	4.12½
1. Copy book, paper Pen & Ink	.87½
	$17.50

Rec'd pay.

JOS. H. CLARKE [143]

On another bill dated March 11, 1822 there is a charge of $1 for a " Portion of Fuel." [143] No further text books are mentioned.

At this rate young Edgar's schooling could not have cost much over $60.00 a year. Even this, however, is paid in installments during 1822, which jibes with the accounts of Mr. Allan's financial embarrassment at the time.[143]

Mr. Allan's English ventures had not been successful, and had displeased both his partner, Charles Ellis, and his uncle, William Galt, upon the backing of whose fortune in the final analysis, rested the credit of the firm. Mr. Allan, was at one time forced to a personal assignment to his creditors, but, by a special arrangement, was left in actual possession of his various proper-

[143] Receipts for Poe's tuition under Master Clarke in the *Ellis & Allan Papers.* Photostats in possession of the author. Also see Woodberry, 1909, page 24.

ties.[144] The record of mortgages upon the family real estate immediately prior to the year 1823, show that, to say the least, Edgar's guardian must have been forced to live with considerable prudence and an eye to the pennies.[144] This in conjunction with the legends as to the early pampering of Edgar by "a princely merchant," and the possible result of the effect of business worries upon John Allan's none too affable temper, may have a direct bearing upon the early life of Poe. There must have been times when the atmosphere of the family circle, despite the gentle presence of Frances Allan and the gaiety of Anne Valentine, reeked with Scotch gloom.

During these periods of gloom and family friction, Edgar would spend the night at Burling's house which met with strong disapproval from Mr. Allan.

As to what went on in the garret of the house on the corner of Clay and Fifth Streets, it is not hard to hazard a fairly accurate guess. There can be no doubt that it was very early Edgar Allan Poe's ambition to be a poet.[145] Some of his schoolmates in Richmond early noted in him a certain aloofness, and a tendency to withdraw to his room and shut himself up to scribble verses. That the desire for creative writing was so strong upon a lad of fourteen or fifteen that he would leave the games and pastimes of his schoolfellows to go alone to his room and write verses is something of major importance in the story of his life.

Poetry, in the frankly objective civilization of the United States, which has largely given itself over to the conquest of a continent and a preoccupation with things for their own sake, is a lonely, and in all save its last honorable stages, a discounted art. The physical form in which it congeals is expensive to produce, requires the coöperation of others, is silent in itself, and has almost no marketable value. Hence, the young person who chooses the art of poetry in which to embody the forms and

[144] Woodberry, 1909, page 27, etc., the assets of *Ellis & Allan* were bought in at public auction by John Allan's uncle William Galt who in 1825 returned them by bequest. See Appendix.

[145] For the statements here, I am relying on statements in the preface to Poe's first book in 1827, and many other indications gleaned from various sources too numerous to list.

enginery of his imagination, is suspected to be doing nothing at all, or to be a little mad. In any case, his interruption upon any pretext whatsoever is thought of as being of no importance whatever. The inevitable and unhealthy conclusion is therefore forced upon such a one by the entire world that he is a being set apart. That his art may be part and parcel of his surroundings and of vital importance to his neighbors, is usually a posthumous discovery. To write poetry he must dream with an intensity that transcends reality; to focus his dreams he requires uninterrupted leisure; and to find this he must hide himself. The result is only too often the feeling of a hunted thing, a sense of remoteness from the life about, and a nervous system jangled by the million interruptions of family and economic life. Above all there is no one to whom he may go to learn his art; or if there is, the result is usually fatal. It is essential, then, that any great poet should begin young, or by the time he has mastered his tools he may be too old to produce. That all of this, including the nervous stress of contempt and interruptions, played its part in the experience of Poe is an almost inevitable conclusion.

It is pertinent to note, therefore, that like Keats and Shelley, Poe began to write very early. Some of the contents of his first book, he claims to have composed at the age of fourteen; nor is this at variance with what we know of his rather precocious development which James Galt noticed even in the conversation of the little boy at Irvine. That he was encouraged at home by Frances Allan, both tradition and the knowledge of his foster-mother's character seem to definitely indicate. Even John Allan is said to have taken a secret pride in the boy's effusions and to have read them upon occasions to the amusement of his friends, who pronounced them " trash." [146] At any rate, sometime toward the end of Edgar's attendance upon Master Clarke, John Allan is known to have shown the Irish schoolmaster a whole manuscript of collected verses by his youthful ward.[147]

These do not seem to have been simply the occasional doggerel which all sentimental young fellows at some time during their

[146] R. H. Stoddard *Memoir*, page 27. Stoddard is to be taken with a grain of salt.
[147] Statement by Master Clarke.

life write to the eyebrows of their calf-loves, but a whole "volume" of verses to an entire townful of young ladies. The object cannot have been to make *all* the girls love him at once, such Mormon propensities in an adolescent boy would, indeed, have been alarming. Even at the risk of rating the attraction of the ladies to be secondary, it looks very much as if the primary interest of the young poet must have been in the poems themselves. These must have been completed before Edgar was fifteen, as old Master Clarke, the schoolmaster, said that Mr. Allan showed them to him with a view of getting his judgment upon the wisdom of their publication, before the Fall of 1823 when that worthy Irishman retired from the headship of the Academy, vice Master Burke. As to what his comments were, we can guess. It has since been claimed that some of these early verses were those printed in Baltimore in 1823, signed "Edgar," but since the verses themselves show no literary evidence to warrant the assumption, the "fact" can be dismissed.

More amorous verses, however, continued to drip from the enamoured pen of the young author, if the statements of several Richmond ladies are to be relied on. These particular ones about 1823 or 1824 seem to have been addressed largely to the belles of a fashionable boarding school kept by Miss Jane Mackenzie, the sister of the Mrs. William Mackenzie who had taken Rosalie into her home. "She was," says a lady biographer,[148] "tall and stately, prim and precise, and was attired generally in black silk and elaborate cap and frizette, a very lady-prioress sort of person. . . . When Edgar was about fifteen or sixteen he began to make trouble for Miss Jane."

This "trouble" took the form of clandestine correspondence with the fair virgins immured behind the walls of Miss Jane. The missives were, it appears, supplemented by candy and offerings of "original poetry." It was Edgar's habit to make pencil sketches of the girls who had most smitten his fancy, and to request these favored maidens to attach locks of their hair to the cards. Little sister, Rosalie, who is described at this time, as a "pretty child with blue eyes, rosy cheeks, and of a sweet dis-

[148] Mrs. Susan Archer Weiss.

position," was the postman for Eros until the indignation of Miss Jane and the slipper of Mrs. Mackenzie rudely discouraged the messenger of romance.

Rosalie appears to have been very fond of her brother, whom she saw frequently at church and as a constant visitor at the Mackenzies, the home of one of Edgar's closest chums, young Jack. She followed the two boys about after school, and romped with them whenever she could. Later on this propensity to follow Edgar was to become embarrassing, due largely to an unfortunate development, or rather lack of development, which came over the girl when she was about twelve years old. Up to that age she seems to have developed in a healthy and usual way, but from then on she ceased to function as a normal human being. Probably due to a defective heredity, the sister of Edgar Allan Poe, while apparently healthy physically, retained the mentality of an adolescent. To the extent that Edgar was plus, Rosalie was minus. Viewed in the cold light of modern psychology, there can be little doubt that they were both abnormal types. Poe was a genius; Rosalie was a moron.

The recollections of this period of Poe's youth, both apocryphal and genuine, are many and various. Even some of those which are well authenticated, however, are not all pertinent to his development, and for the most part assume the nature of irrelevant small-talk and gossip. But a few of the memories of Col. Thomas H. Ellis, the son of Charles Ellis, who was on peculiar terms of intimacy with both Poe and the Allans are worth recording.[149]

Among other things about Poe, he says that "He was very beautiful, yet brave and manly for one so young. No boy ever had a greater influence over me than he had. He was indeed a leader among his playmates." Tom Ellis remembered that one day Edgar Poe took him off into the fields and woods near Belvedere, an estate that then belonged to Judge Bushrod Washington, and kept the little fellow there all day, while he shot a lot of the good judge's domestic fowls. For this Mr. Allan gave his "son" a good whipping when he returned late that evening. Poe also

149 Harrison's *Life of Poe*, pages 23, 24, 25.

taught Tom how to shoot, swim, and play bandy, and once " rescued " the little chap from drowning after throwing him into the river at the Falls in order to teach him to swim. Edgar also chased Tom's little sister Jane into hysterics with a toy snake which caused considerable family difficulties. The Allans it seems, significantly enough, would have liked to adopt this little girl as their daughter, and showered the family of the " senior partner " with the " largest Christmas and birthday gifts which they received." Colonel Ellis recalled Poe's having taken first prize in elocution when he competed with Channing Moore, Cary Wickham, Andrew Johnston, Nat Howard and others. " He was trained in all the habits of the most polished society. There was not a brighter, more graceful, or more attractive boy in the city than Edgar Allan Poe." Of the social affairs in the Allan household about this time, however, we get a somewhat different picture from young Jack Mackenzie.

That young gentleman, it appears, could not abide the ordeal of a meal at the Allans. " Mr. Allan was a good man in his way," he said, " but Edgar was not fond of him. He was sharp and exacting, and with his long, hooked nose, and small keen eyes looking from under his shaggy eyebrows, he always reminded me of a hawk. I know that often when angry with Edgar he would threaten to turn him adrift, and that he never allowed him to lose sight of his dependence on his charity." The Allans, who were fond of giving teas and " sociables," required Edgar to be present, usually with one or two boy friends, and occasionally he was given a party of his own when both boys and girls were invited. On such occasions, despite the charm of Mrs. Allan and the good fun of " Aunt Nancy " Valentine, a rigid etiquette reigned, and Mr. Allan used these occasions quite obviously to cultivate in Edgar the stilted manners which the code of the time prescribed, a type of social behavior more consonant with the inclinations and training of Mr. Allan, than that of higher Virginia society.

Formalities, important as Mr. Allan may have thought them to be, could not have troubled Edgar very much at this time. He seems to have led a double life of dreaming and verse mak-

ing on the one hand, and a thoroughly harum-scarum existence on the other. He was fond of stealing off with three of four cronies to swim in the James near *Rocketts* or the pool below the Falls, where he met, and apparently enjoyed, the society of the young toughs of that neighborhood known to all boys of Richmond as " Butcher Cats." When the water was low, they would wade over the rocky bed of the James to the far bank and set fish-traps along the shores of its willow-islands. Here Edgar with Burling and others led a more or less " Huck Finn "-" Tom Sawyer " kind of existence during the summers, and developed a wholesome, and, for a boy of his years, an unusual physique — in muscle at least. On the James, indeed, occurred the " great " feat of his boyhood, when he more than satisfied the Byronic tradition. Poe himself was proud of his athletic accomplishment, and as late as May, 1835, wrote to Mr. White the editor of the *Southern Literary Messenger* about some mention of the incident which was remembered for years in Richmond:

> The writer seems to compare my swim with that of Lord Bryon, whereas there can be no comparison between them. Any swimmer ' in the falls ' in my days, would have swum the Hellespont, and thought nothing of the matter. I swam from Ludlow's wharf to Warwick (six miles), in a hot June sun, against one of the strongest tides ever known in the river. It would have been a feat comparatively easy to swim twenty miles in still water. I would not think much of attempting to swim the British channel from Dover to Calais.[150]

Edgar was evidently considerable of a hero. Quite a little crowd gathered to see him start. Master Burke, the schoolmaster, followed in a boat; with Robert Cabell, little Robert Stanard, and some others trying to keep abreast of them along the banks. Poe succeeded in reaching his goal and walked home afterwards apparently none the worse for wear, and in triumph. Such, however, was not the experience of little Rob Stanard who returned home very late, covered with mud and soaked. His excuse to his father, Judge Robert Stanard, was that " he had been walking

[150] Published in the *Southern Literary Messenger* and also quoted by Ingram. For the incident see also Harrison, Woodberry, etc.

down the river bank watching Edgar Poe swim to Warwick."[151] As to what followed immediately history is silent. Yet the acquaintance of these two lads was important. Out of it sprang the first great emotional experience of Edgar Poe's life, and one of the supreme lyrical utterances of romantic poetry.

The tie which often exists thus between an older and a younger playmate, is one of the dearest and most serene of human associations. It is not a complicated one, and there are no selfish motives in it. The recognition and protection of the older boy, whose superior mental and physical development give him an almost magic superiority, the recognition of which is delightful, is returned whole-heartedly by the younger partner in the form of undisguised admiration, trust, and affection, to which only the term, "hero worship," can apply. Between Edgar Poe and Rob Stanard such a friendship seems to have existed. It is probable that Poe found in the high bred delicacy and sensitive nature of the younger boy, for such from many accounts he appears to have been, a refuge from the more boisterous and insensate natures about him. What more natural then, than that little Rob should take his hero Edgar home and exhibit him proudly to the family, who had doubtless been regaled with accounts of his charm, prowess, and virtues. It is the essence of a hero that he has no faults.

So it came about, one important day for poetry, that Rob Stanard took Eddie Poe home to show him his pet rabbits and pigeons. After these were duly, and no doubt satisfactorily admired, for Edgar was always very fond of pets, considering that animals were in many respects superior to men, young Bob probably invited him into the house to meet his mother, Mrs. Jane Stith Stanard. One can imagine the two quaintly dressed boys entering the old house together to meet "mother." That meeting was to be the awakening encounter and emotional inspiration of his manhood.

Mrs. Stanard was in one of the front rooms standing by a window niche. The light falling upon her, caught in her dark

[151] Reminiscences of John C. Stanard furnished to the author by W. G. Stanard, President of the Virginia Historical Association, August, 1925.



The House of Poe's "Helen", Jane Stith Stanard

Capitol Square, Richmond

(The house behind the statue of Henry Clay.)

The chimney to the right was on BUSHROD WASHINGTON'S office. It was in this house that POE met the mother of his schoolmate, ROBERT STANARD. This lady influenced his whole life, and has been immortalized in one of POE'S greatest poems, *To Helen*

Probably the only extant photograph

Courtesy of the Edgar Allan Poe Shrine, Richmond, Virginia

ringlets crossed by a white snood, glowed in the classic folds of her gown, and flowed about her slenderly graceful figure. Her face, the lineaments of which were turned toward Poe, was tinted by the gold of leaf-filtered sunshine. To the astonished boy her very being and body seemed to radiate light.[152] "This is Edgar Poe, mother," said little Robert. "This is 'Helen,' Edgar," said a voice in the boy's soul, "in her behold the comfort of great beauty." On the bewildered ears of the young poet fell the sweet voice of Mrs. Stanard thanking him for his kindness to her little son and bidding him welcome with gracious words to her house.

Poe went home in a dream from which he never fully aroused himself.[153] In Mrs. Stanard he had found the chivalrous ideal of a young boy's first idolatry and the material comfort of sympathy and appreciation, for it is probable that to Mrs. Stanard he read his verses, and received from her both helpful criticism and wise encouragement. What she meant to him, only an aspiring young poet, left an orphan, and a worshiper of beauty could know. That there were many visits to her house during the course of several years, and not one only, as has been so often stated, is certain.

Judge Robert Stanard's house, where Poe's "Helen," and his little friend Robert lived, is still standing. It is on Ninth Street facing Capital Square in Richmond, and in the days of Poe's boyhood had a portico and marble stoop with brass rails in front. Its garden, which was a beautiful one, occupied almost the entire square. Here in the midst of fragrant Southern bloom and the sudden wings of little Rob's pigeons, Edgar must often have sat in some quiet nook with Rob and his mother, read his poems, and listened to the words of encouragement which fell with a double

[152] There is, of course, no precise contemporary account of the actual scene of this meeting. I am giving the descriptions from a knowledge of the house and descriptions of a portrait of Jane Stith Stanard. The poem *To Helen* seems to be the first hand impression of a beloved person bathed in and radiating light.

[153] Poe's own statement to Mrs. Helen Whitman that Jane Stith Stanard was Poe's "Helen" is attested beyond all dispute by the knowledge of the Stanard family, and a copy of the 1845 edition of Poe's poems given to Mrs. Whitman by him. On page 91 of the first volume, the poem *To Helen* appears, besides the title of which is the word "Stannard" written in Poe's own hand in pencil. Catalogue of American Artists' Association, April 28, 1924.

value from such beautiful lips. There are many recollections in the Stanard family of young Poe's intimacy with all the inmates of the house, and the sweet tie of sympathy existing between Mrs. Stanard and the handsome young lad was remarked by all. John C. Stanard, a nephew of Robert's father, remembers coming to the house one day and knocking for some time without any response. He finally heard steps as if someone inside were trying to make as little noise as possible. Then the door was opened by little Robert Stanard and Edgar Poe, both of whom looked embarrassed. He found that the family was out, and that the servants had taken advantage of their absence to go out, too. The two boys had been playing a forbidden game of cards, and after his knock were hiding the pack before they let him in. In the face of such testimony it is idle to say that Poe met "Helen" only once.[151]

Both Mrs. Stanard and Edgar Poe were types of those supersensitive natures whose higher inner processes take place in that holy land of sensibility, the western border of which so often marches with the kingdom of insanity. Both of them were to trespass over this boundary in the dark caravan of melancholy, Edgar for occasional sojourns, but "Helen" to be lost permanently amid the strange gleams and shadows of that realm only a few years later. Between these kindred there had arisen an instinctive and instant bond of sympathy. For an instant before they passed into the night, their fingers touched, and Edgar for once was completely happy in another's presence.

> I *have been* happy, tho' but in a dream.
> I have been happy — and I love the theme,

Wrote Poe three or four years later in his first book.

Thus to have found this first real love and the maternal tenderness, which filled the greatest need in his life, combined in a single person was a piece of psychic good fortune of momentous import to Poe. What was said in their conversations is too long in the past to know, probably nothing of great verbal import. These talks, however, seem to have marked those periods, when for a few instants the clock ticked off a few moments

when Edgar Allan Poe found himself completely at home in this world.

They were interrupted by the advance across the dial of the shadow which was to completely envelope " Helen " and to wrap her from the sight of Edgar. Mrs. Stanard was going insane. In April, 1824, she died at the age of thirty-one. Azrael had scored *two* in what was to be an increasingly intimate association with Israfel. Jane Stith Stanard was buried in Shockoe Cemetery where she now lies with the other members of her family, among whom is " little Bob." A pall of violets, those " myriad types of the human eye " have filled the little inclosure with eternal spring.[154]

There is an immortal story that Poe haunted the spot. He said that he did, in a confession to another Helen years later, and tradition seems to confirm the tale. That his great grief was noted even by his companions, is a matter of record. Undoubtedly behind the little gate rests the most ideal love of the man's soul. There is another inscription upon the stone, but for posterity there is only one epitaph —

TO HELEN

Helen, thy beauty is to me
 Like those Nicean barks of yore,
That gently, o'er a perfumed sea
 The weary, wayworn wanderer bore
To his own native shore.

On desperate seas long wont to roam,
 Thy hyacinth hair, thy classic face,
Thy Naiad airs have brought me home
 To the glory that was Greece,
And the grandeur that was Rome.

Lo! in yon brilliant window-niche,
 How statue-like I see thee stand,
 The agate lamp within thy hand!
Ah! Psyche, from the regions which
 Are Holy Land!

[154] The epitaphs of the Stanard family read: " Jane Stith Stanard . . . departed this life on the 28th of April, in the year 1824, in the 31st year of her age." " Robert Stanard (*husband*) born 17th Aug. 1781, died 14th May, 1846."

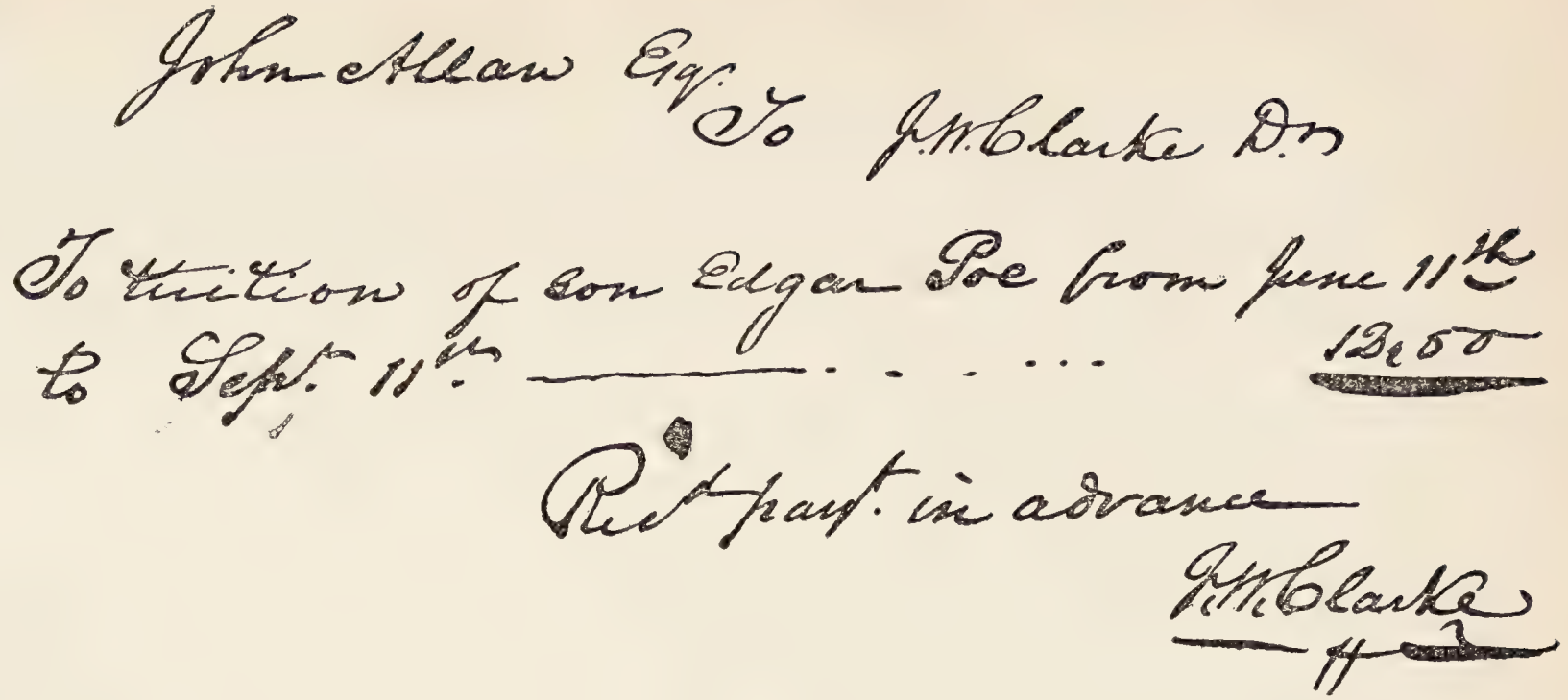
" Robert Craig Stanard (Poe's playmate) born on the 7th of May, 1814 and died in Richmond on the 2nd of June, 1857." Hence Poe was about fifteen when he first saw " Helen," and little Rob, ten.

CHAPTER VII
Israfel Salutes the Marquis

OVER a third of the span of the days allotted Israfel had already flashed their way through the kaleidoscope of their seasons, before "Helen" was borne to her final refuge. The fiery, sensitive young boy was fast budding into the even more sensitive man, a process which seems to have taken place rather precociously in Poe, for all accounts agree that, both mentally and physically, the young poet developed "beyond his years." That his heredity and temperament completed themselves in an accelerated, but accentuated, and rather brief period, the history of his parents and the evidence about him seems to indicate. He was a lamp which burned intensely in response to the current of a life which was so strong, and which alternated so violently between hope and despair, that the filament was soon burnt out. In the course of the next few years, from 1823 on, he was to experience a nervous tension and undergo trials, the nerve racking effect of which undoubtedly left him unstrung, and followed him through the remaining lustra of his life. To a finely organized body and intellect, the trials of adolescence are often sufficient in themselves to dictate the future motions of the man; add to this the body-blows of death, an unhappy and harassed love affair, a complete change in the methods of living of one's family, with all the adjustments of environment involved, accompanied by an agony of domestic dissensions, and it does not require the prophetic offices of a psychologist to predict the result.[155] Through such an experience the young Poe was about to pass. For several reasons, then, the year 1823 may be said to definitely mark the end of his childhood.

One of the minor changes, but, nevertheless to a youth, an im-

[155] The evidence of the growing tension from this time on in the Allan household rests upon such a variety of indications that, to present all the proof, would turn this chapter into an exhibition of stray phrases and hints from documents. A few of the more important will be presented.


John Allan Esq. To J.W. Clarke Dr

To tuition of son Edgar Poe from June 11th
to Sept. 11th ——— 12.50

Rec't part in advance
J.W. Clarke

Bill of J. W. Clarke

Richmond schoolmaster, to John Allan for tuition of "son," Edgar Poe

From the Ellis & Allan Papers

portant one, was the resignation of Master Joseph Clarke as the headmaster of the school which Poe attended, the somewhat flamboyant régime of the Irishman giving way to that of the new incumbent, Master William Burke, a man of sounder learning and more rigid discipline, the rod being by no means a stranger to his strong right hand. In the Fall of 1823, Edgar Allan Poe was the star pupil in the ceremony attendant upon the change of school administrations, and addressed his retiring master in an English ode, written by himself for the occasion.[156] The delighted old Irishman never forgot this, and, years later in Baltimore, recalled of his famous pupil that " Edgar had a very sweet disposition, he was always cheerful, brimful of mirth and a very great favorite with his schoolmates. I never had occasion to speak a harsh word to him, much less to make him do penance. He had a great ambition to excell." Master Clarke also remembered that during the vacation of 1822 two of his pupils, Edgar Poe and Nat Howard, had each written him a complimentary letter in Latin and that Edgar's had been in verse. That before he was sixteen, Poe could manage Latin verses, and compose and deliver in English a school ode for an audience of his schoolmates and parents, may be minor exhibits, but they are at least tell-tale straws on the current of his literary progress.[157]

With the advent of Master Burke, a less happy period of every-day and school life seems to have fallen upon Poe. Not that the new schoolmaster was responsible, indeed, it was noted by Edgar's schoolmates that Poe was almost alone among them in escaping condign attentions, but the young scholar seems to have developed an aloofness and moodiness, a tendency to withdraw himself more than ever from the generally all-absorbing activities of school life, so engrossing to the average boy, which was the cause of remark and distinctly remembered by his fellows.[158] Looking backward, it is not hard to understand what must have been a mystery to his schoolmates.

156 Woodberry, 1909 edition, vol. I, page 25, and others.

157 Recollections of Joseph Clarke, Poe's schoolmaster, when interviewed by a Baltimore reporter.

158 Recollections of John Mackenzie and Dr. Creed Thomas of Richmond, Poe's schoolmates.

Mrs. Stanard was going insane and dying. About this time the visits to her house must have had to cease, and we can imagine Edgar's anxious inquiries morning after morning of little Robert before school, the mournful replies of his little friend, and the vision of a loved face, seen through a haze of secret tears, glimmering vaguely upon the pages of Latin texts. Decidedly, this would not be understood by the boys on the benches about him, nor was it a subject which he desired to have discussed. The repression and depression of secret sorrow had already begun to erect its barrier between him and the bright juvenile world about. There were also, in all probability, other reasons for sullen irritation and disquiet, reasons the most profound.

About this time the health of Poe's foster-mother again becomes the subject of anxious remarks in the annals of the family correspondence,[159] and it seems probable that Frances Allan began about now to pass into the state of ill health and decline which in the space of three or four years was to stretch her not far from Mrs. Stanard in Shockoe Cemetery.

Poe loved Frances Allan with one of the greatest loves of his life,[160] the ties of gratitude and natural affection which bound him to her were as great as can exist. In addition, she possessed that quality of physical beauty which he worshiped, and by this time he must have long known that it was to her and her sister, to his " dear Ma, and Aunt Nancy " that he owed his preservation and his continued cherishing in the house of John Allan. What were the physical causes of Mrs. Allan's continued illness, and whether they were connected with her childlessness, is a question which by its inevitable and proper privacy precludes both the material for and the desire to discuss it. That Poe pondered it, however, in his heart seems hardly problematical. He was now a man, possessed of the mature knowledge and feelings which often come early to Southern youths, and he lived in an

[159] See *Ellis & Allan Papers*, Washington, D. C., in the letters between John Allan and his sisters about the Galt will this subject is incidentally mentioned.

[160] The letters of Poe to his foster-mother a few years later were said to have been couched in terms of passionate endearment.

age and place where the frankness and outspoken habits of the late Eighteenth Century still lingered strongly. What he knew, or thought about this problem which affected him and his family circle so vitally, we can never know, but it is possible that results of his speculations may have strongly affected him in his attitude towards his foster-father. They were facing each other now in the same house as man to man. It was no longer, as in England, " little Edgar " and " Pa," but Edgar Allan Poe, poet, looking searchingly into the eyes of John Allan, merchant. Upon occasions it must have been a type of scrutiny which even John Allan found somewhat disconcerting.

In 1823–1824 Richmond, Virginia, was a small town according to modern standards, of whose inhabitants a large proportion were slaves. The conventions of society were strict, and the confines of the white community in the city were numerically narrow. The wireless was yet to be invented, but news of a certain character undoubtedly radiated rapidly, and, from the nature of the conditions existing in the Allan household from about this time until the death and the filing of the will of John Allan, which confirmed certain rumors, it seems warrantable to infer that Frances Allan was by now aware of the fact that she had not been the sole object of her husband's affections.[161]

That the intelligence would be disturbing to her, and to the little circle over whose destinies she had watched with tender love and solicitude, it seems fatuous to remark. Whether she confided immediately in Edgar no one can know. It seems unlikely. Her loyalty to her husband, and her regard for the tender feelings of the sensitive schoolboy would probably forbid, but Poe would be quick to sense the electricity in the atmosphere of trouble, and in the inevitable family alignment which was to fol-

[161] Just when, or how, Frances Allan came to suspect this cannot, of course, be shown. From all indications, the life of the family while in England had been very happy. Between 1820 and 1824 *something* occurred to change this. Mrs. Allan's health began seriously to fail, we find John Allan and Poe at serious odds, and Edgar very gloomy. From later correspondence it is known that Poe took his foster-mother's part in the family dissensions. Miss Valentine's sympathy was naturally with her sister. It appears that about this time Edwin Collier or one of the other illegitimate sons of Allan was taken from Richmond and sent to school in Washington, D. C.

low, he could not have helped but take the side to which sympathy, and, a little later, full knowledge of the facts impelled him. It was, of course, that of his "mother."

During the period of financial embarrassment leading up to the mortgaging and assignment of his property [162] after the return from England, John Allan's temper could not have been of the best, and this too would have added to the stresses in the household. Two years later, on March 26, 1825, however, Mr. Allan was relieved of the shadow on this side of his affairs by the death of his uncle, William Galt, who left him the bulk of a great fortune, the Allans, Galts, and other relatives in both America and Scotland coming in for minor shares. It was an event which had been anticipated with various feelings by a large number of those who expected to benefit. Poe afterwards stated that the fortune amounted in all to $750,000, whether that is substantially correct or not, it is difficult at this date to ascertain.[163] Suffice it to say, that John Allan found himself the recipient of a fortune in cash, merchandise, slaves, securities and real estate, which would in modern times entitle him to be described as a millionaire. The readjustments involved in his life, status and social ambitions, and the effect of these upon his immediate family were various and not altogether restful, nor entirely happy.

As one of the richest men in Virginia, he would inevitably become the object of considerable attention and remark, a condition which, owing to certain aspects of his private affairs, was not altogether to be relished. Envy was, as always, present to drop a little vitriol into the Falernian. John Allan was troubled with a lame foot and raised his cane high when he walked — "So Galt has left all his money to old swell-foot Allan" — was the remark made by a Richmond acquaintance in a letter to a friend

[162] The year 1823 had been one of extreme financial depression amounting to panic. William Galt's death later, came in the nick of time to save John Allan.

[163] Letter from Poe to William Poe dated, Richmond, August 20th, 1835, "Brought up to no profession, and educated in the expectation of an immense fortune (Mr. A. having been worth $750,000) the blow has been a heavy one. . . ." etc. See Harrison, vol. II, page 15. See also the will of William Galt, Appendix.

when he heard the news.[164] Perhaps the feeling of such an attitude in the background, brought the cane down a little more firmly, and gave a firmness and breadth to certain plans for the future in which a grand family mansion played a part; plans that might otherwise have been conceived upon a somewhat less impressive scale. There was trouble in Scotland over the administration of the will, too, and threats to appeal to the law. In the eyes of certain relatives the shares which they received appeared attenuated,[165] and the brisk correspondence which ensued reeked with Caledonian frankness, to which the replies were carefully pondered.

All this was not conducive to the peace of mind of John Allan or Edgar Allan Poe. The world about was troubled by many things, its vistas were suddenly strangely widened, the prime affections upon which it hung were becoming frayed, and in the background She of the agate lamp was awfully dying. Of these days, Creed Thomas, Poe's schoolmate, says[166] — "It was a noticeable fact that he never asked any of his schoolmates to go home with him after school. The boys would frequently on Fridays take dinner or spend the night with each other at their homes, but Poe was never known to enter into this social intercourse. After he left the school ground we saw no more of him until next day." Where was the merry and popular Edgar Poe of other days? The shadows, it would seem, had already begun to fall.

In April, 1824, occurred the death of Mrs. Stanard. It is not known definitely whether her unhappy young admirer was present at her burial or not. He was a close friend of little Rob, and well liked by the family, but the chances are against it, as the

164 The author does not feel at liberty to quote the source. See also a letter concerning William Galt printed, Appendix.

165 Letter from John Allan to one of his sisters, even some years later, from Richmond, March 27, 1827. ". . . Perhaps the four first Legatees named in my Uncle's Will do not attach sufficient importance to Capt. and Jane Walsh's lawyer's letter, you are out of the scrape, unless indeed Capt. Walsh can prove as he has written that there can be no doubt but Jane is entitled to the whole residue. I think this rather too absurd, but will scuffle for her third in place of a Seventh. . . ." etc., for three long pages. *Ellis & Allan Papers,* Washington, D. C.

166 Dr. Creed Thomas, afterward a well-known Richmond physician.

nature of " Helen's " taking off had been so peculiarly tragic that even the presence of dear " strangers " would have been painful to the family. If Poe haunted her grave at night as tradition asserts, the nature of his experiences in a dark cemetery with the sound of the night wind through the funereal gratings and tall grave grasses must have been searing to the soul of one who was scarcely more than a boy. Nor could a reckless abandonment to even so extreme and natural a grief have failed to give a morbid cast to his thoughts, and have tried his already taut nervous system. The truth is that Poe's weeping by night at the grave of " Helen " is one of the episodes in his life which probably can never be reduced to a certainty. The main evidence for it rests upon his own account given years later to Mrs. Helen Whitman, when he was under every inducement to render as romantic as possible every association which hung about the name of " Helen," past and present. The story is almost too dramatically pat, and episodically fortunate, to be taken as wholly true. It agrees too well with the legend which he built up about himself later, and with the lugubrious sentimentality of the time. It is what he would like to have happened, and that, only too often, was sufficient for Poe to " make it so." That he was afraid of the dark and a prey to terrifying visions, is against the probability of his watching by a new made grave at night, nor was the cemetery in those days of medical license without proper caretakers. It is also true that other sad associations of the place were later added to burden his memory.[167] A visit to the spot with the facts in mind will best enable one to decide. That his grief was a great one, and lasting, no one can ever doubt.

About this time Poe seems to have first been haunted by nightmares, of which John Mackenzie heard him say afterward, " that the most horrible thing he (Poe) could imagine as a boy was to feel an ice-cold hand laid upon his face in a pitch dark room when alone at night; or to awaken in semi-darkness and see an

[167] The author ventures it as his *opinion* here that Poe's terrible grief upon returning from the army in 1829 and finding Frances Allan dead, and his well authenticated despair at her grave after the funeral, was later on confused in his own mind, and in the recollections of others, with a more romantic legend about Mrs. Stanard. The reader is left to his own inferences.

evil face gazing close into his own; and that these fancies had so haunted him that he would often keep his head under the bed-covering until nearly suffocated." Here at least is something to make the psychologist ponder and the philosopher start. What may be the significance of cold, dead hands laid at midnight upon the brow of a shuddering boy must be left to them. The dead, however, at this time were by no means the entire preoccupation of young Poe.

In the Autumn of 1824 not only the City of Richmond but the entire State of Virginia was looking forward feverishly and preparing dramatically for the approaching visit of the Marquis de La Fayette.[168] It was the greatest national event of a personal nature since the death of Washington, and it occurred at a period when there was nothing of much importance to occupy the mind of the public politically or internationally. By the end of the first quarter of the Nineteenth Century La Fayette had outlived nearly all of his great revolutionary contemporaries, and he personified to the new generations, and to the already awakening giant of the young Western Republic, the ideals which in theory at least were held most dear. No doubt had as yet been entertained as to their efficacy to bring about the millennium, and in the romantic, affable, and intriguingly hawk-like little Frenchman, the sons and daughters of the generation of the Revolution beheld the foe of tyrants, the friend of Washington, a great soldier, and the symbol of the triumph of the doctrines of Jefferson, and the philosophy of Rousseau. Here was a perfect hero in fact and body, and the reception tendered him throughout the Union took on all the guise of a patriotic triumph. Nor was it without justification. It was received on the part of the honor guest with a tact and grace, the memory of which played its part in one of the side shows of the World War a century later. In the life of Poe, it provided the first opportunity for the young poet to participate in the affairs of this world in the rôle of a man. What he learned while La Fayette was in Richmond, and the effect of his active

168 If the reader should think that the incident is given undue prominence here, let him turn to the newspapers and letters of the time. The importance of La Fayette's visit as a turning point in Poe's experience has never been made clear.

part in the military pomp and ceremonial display of the occasion, bore fruit in the future actions and movements of the man. It was his confirmation into the affairs of adult life.

Virginia was under peculiar debt to La Fayette, his campaign against Arnold and his gallantry at Yorktown were remembered as a part of her history, and the Old Dominion determined to surpass herself in the tradition of open-handed hospitality. Letters began to pour in to Governor Pleasants from all over the State.

Frederickburg, Oct. 6th, 1824

James Pleasants, *Esqr.*

Dear Sir:

Under the impression that Genl La Fayette on his route to York will pass through this town the citizens are making preparations to receive him.

Connected with these arrangements, it is wished to know the views of the Executive of the State on this subject after the example of other States, is it intended that you meet him at the State line in person or by deputation, and what mode of conveyance is intended for him? I am requested by our Committee of arrangements here to ask your reply to the above.

Should you pass through this town to meet him on the Potomac, our citizens will be pleased of the opportunity of testifying the respect which they entertain towards you.

Respectfully,

Garrett Miner [169]

To a great soldier the chief honors were, of course, to be military, and in addition to the letters from patriotic citizens, there were many from the commanding officers of the State Militia asking to be provided with arms for the occasion from the State Arsenals. The helpless state of the militia, indeed, is not without its alarming and amusing sides.[170]

In Richmond the excitement and anticipation were intense, and in no circles more so than among the young gentlemen of Burke's

[169] This and the letters immediately following are from the archives of the Virginia State Library.

[170] See a characteristic letter from Yorktown, Virginia, dated 25 September, 1824, to George Pleasants requesting arms for the local militia unit, signed John B. Christian, Capt., — Virginia State Library *Archives.*

Academy and other well-born youths of the town. A military company, called the " Richmond Junior Volunteers " or " Morgan Legion," was organized and provided with a uniform of the fringed hunting shirts of the frontier. Of this proud little company John Lyle was elected Captain, and Edgar Allan Poe Lieutenant, a distinct tribute to Poe, for the offices were doubtless much coveted. The next thing on the *tapis* was to provide the organization with arms, the details of which transaction seem to have been managed by the two young officers.

In the carefully fostered legend of the faithfulness and contentment of the slaves under the ancient régime in the old South, it has been conveniently forgotten that one of the ever present fears under which a slave-holding community lived was the nightmare of a rebellion of the blacks. Nor was it an idle dream. There had been in Virginia already several alarming, though abortive, attempts on the part of the negroes which, however futile, had sufficed to raise the " goose flesh " of the planters and the inhabitants of towns. In Richmond a regiment of the State Guards was kept ready for emergencies at all times, and a portion known as " *the* guard," was always under arms at the penitentiary where the barracks were. The officers were required to appear upon all occasions in uniform. In order to welcome La Fayette it was proposed to march the 19th, Richmond, Regiment out of the city. As it would never do to leave the town entirely unguarded, an arrangement was made to distribute arms to volunteer militia which this letter records.

Sir

Dr. Adams the Mayor of the City of Richmond has suggested the propriety on my part as the Col. of the 19th Regiment of applying to the Executive for a number of arms to be used by the militia during the absence of the many persons who are about to leave the City for York, which can be returned after the particular necessity for them ceases. In furtherance of his views I have thought it proper to make the application and would be pleased if the Executive would communicate their determination to the Mayor.

I am Sir, etc.

L. B. Darvie [169]

Col. 19th Regt., Va. Inf.

The permission was granted and among those applying for arms was the Company of Junior Morgan Riflemen, the application being signed by John Lyle, Captain, and Edgar A. Poe, Lieutenant. The matter-of-fact indorsement on the outside

Richmond Oct. 13, 1824

To the Govenor and Council

Gentlemen:

The subscribers to the inclosed list having associated for the purpose of forming a patrol, for the protection of the City during the absence of the Volunteer Companies, respectfully ask through me that they may be furnished with the necessary Arms and Acoutrements.

Respectfully

Inman Baker, Jr.[169]

can scarcely convey the pride and sense of rapture which must have filled the hearts of the Richmond Junior Volunteers, who were included in the list, as they put real guns over their shoulders, or of Lieutenant Edgar Poe as he girt a sword on his thigh and sallied forth to meet La Fayette.

La Fayette,[171] clad in a cocked hat and short trousers, a style then almost extinct, arrived on a steamer from Norfolk. " Along with John C. Calhoun and two members of the visiting committee, he was drawn in a carriage by four horses while the Fayette Guard marched in front, and young George Washington La Fayette followed in similar state behind. This procession of carriages, filled with officers and worthies of the Revolution, passed to a double arch of evergreens, in front of the *Union Hotel,* at the corners of which were four beautiful young ladies posed as living statues." Here the Marquis was greeted by forty officers of the Revolution, his comrades in arms of as many years before. Not the least moving sight of the procession which followed, and certainly the proudest of all, was the company of " pretty boys " called the " Richmond Junior Volunteers," which headed by Captain John Lyle and Lieutenant Edgar Poe, with their swords at salute, now passed in review.

171 For a complete and excellent description of La Fayette's visit to Richmond see *Richmond, Its People and its Story,* by Mary Newton Stanard, chapter XVI.

The boys of this company, as representing some of the best families of Richmond, seem to have acted as a bodyguard for the old patriot, and there is a well-founded tradition of their escorting him to the Memorial Church with Chief Justice Marshall, where Captain Lyle and Lieutenant Poe accompanied him up the aisle to the Marshall pew.

Poe would have been doubly proud, for he must have been noticed and have become personally known to La Fayette as the grandson of "General" David Poe of Baltimore. On his visit there La Fayette is said to have gone especially to the grave of the old Revolutionary hero and exclaimed, "*Ici repose un coeur noble.*" [172] The knowledge of this fact, which could scarcely have been unknown to Poe who was in correspondence with his brother William Henry,[173] and other relatives in Baltimore, must have quickened his sense of family pride on his paternal side, and have drawn his attention to a military career. At any rate, less than three years later we find him joining the Army.

The effect of a boys' cadet company upon the psychology of its members is more lasting and goes deeper than most casually minded parents realize. The pride of gold lace and brass buttons, the fine feathers of the young warrior, their affect upon the young ladies of his acquaintance, and the gang spirit engendered by the organization which develops the chief virtue of youth, loyalty, is often character-fixing in its effect. Poe, as an officer, had exercised authority, its taste was sweet, beyond doubt, and his pride and self reliance had been aroused. That the "Richmond Junior Volunteers" were a great success is evident from the fact that they

[172] Here, indeed, rested a noble heart — David Poe, Assistant Deputy Quartermaster for Baltimore during the Revolutionary War, had been one of the foremost of the young patriots who had cleared the British out of Maryland. Notable among his deeds was the leading of a mob that drove out the Royal Sheriff and made one William Goddard, editor of a Tory sheet which had attacked Washington, feel the weight of patriotic wrath. "General" Poe, as he was called, not only fought for his country but, out of his own scant savings, advanced certain sums to the cause which were never repaid. In 1814, at the age of seventy-one, he again volunteered and saw active fighting against the British in the Battle of North Point. Many years after his death in Baltimore, his widow, then in greatly reduced circumstances, received a pittance from the Republic.

[173] Edgar had received a letter from Henry Poe in Baltimore while La Fayette was in Richmond — See John Allan's letter to Henry Poe page 125.

did not disband, and, a month after La Fayette's visit, they are to be found still drilling and petitioning for the permanent possession of their arms.

Richmond, Nov. 17, 1824

To the Governor:

At the request of the members of the Richmond Junior Volunteers, we beg leave to solicit your permission for them to retain the arms which they lately were permitted to draw from the Armorey. We are authorized to say that each individual will not only pledge himself to take proper care of them, but we ourselves will promise to attend strictly to the order in which they are kept by the company.

We are, etc.

John Lyle

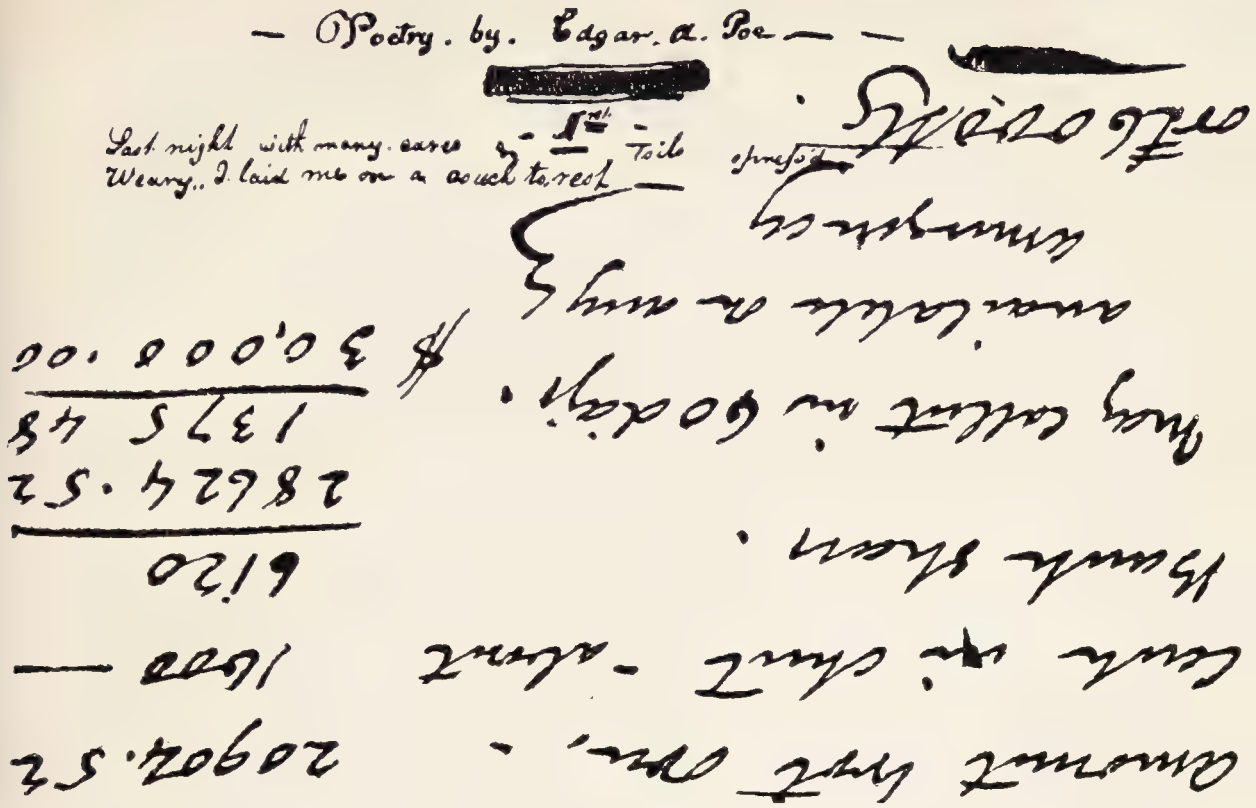
Edgar A. Poe [174]

As to Governor Pleasants' reply, the records are silent, but for Poe the end of his military juvenilia was not yet.

During his association with the members of other military organizations and various persons with whom this new freedom of experience brought him in contact, young Poe seems for the first time to have ranged the city rather freely, and to have been treated as a man. It cannot be positively stated, but it seems highly probable, that the effect of this experience at a time of open house and *mardi gras* while La Fayette was being fêted, was to bring him in contact with new acquaintances of a type who regaled his ears in no uncertain terms with the details and circumstances of his foster-father's indiscretions; so that he gathered from a portion of the community, with which he had not heretofore been familiar, a more precise idea of the estimation in which, in some quarters, his guardian was held.

Be this as it may, at any rate there is direct evidence of the fact that about this time his moodiness and general attitude began to give his guardian considerable alarm. Inference seems to warrant the assumption that the severe visitations of John Allan's discipline could not have been received at this time by Edgar with the purely regretful protests of childhood. As the rod fell on shoulders which had just worn epaulets, or upon that humbler

[174] *Calendar of Virginia State Papers,* X, 518, (1892). The original letter has been lost.



The Earliest Known Lines of Poetry with Signature of Edgar A. Poe

"Last night with many cares and toils oppress'd
Weary . . I laid me on a couch to rest—"

These lines, found by the author in the *Ellis & Allan* files for November, 1824, are written on a sheet of paper covered by JOHN ALLAN's figures dealing with his precarious financial situation at the time. They show POE in a typical melancholy mood alluded to in JOHN ALLAN's letter to HENRY POE. This couplet, which antedates *Tamerlane* by three years, is here first published. It confirms POE's statements that he wrote poetry as a young boy

locality where the rods of parents are wont to descend, it is highly probable that the hurt pride of "Lieutenant Poe," lately attached to the Marquis de La Fayette, replied to the reproaches of his guardian in a truthful but disrespectful manner; or that he sulked like a young bear and indicated that there were good reasons why. John Allan was not only displeased, he was alarmed; and shortly after the departure of the Marquis we find him justifying himself to the Almighty and fortifying himself in the regard of Edgar's brother in Baltimore in a rather interesting style. The letter is to William Henry Leonard Poe then seventeen years old.

Richmond Nov. 1824

DEAR HENRY:

I have just seen your letter of the 25th ult. to Edgar and am much afflicted he has not written you. He has had little else to do, for me he does nothing and seems quite miserable and sulky and ill tempered to all the Family. How we have acted to produce this is beyond my conception, why I have put up so long with his conduct is little less wonderful. The boy professes not a spark of affection for us, not a particle of affection for all my care and kindness towards him. I have given (him) a much superior Education than ever I received myself. If Rosalie has to relie on any affection from him God in his mercy perserve her — I fear his associates have led him to adopt a course (?) of thinking and acting very contrary to what he professed when in England. I feel proudly the difference between your principles and his and hence my desire to stand as I ought to do in your Estimation. Had I done my duty as faithfully to my God as I ought to Edgar, then had Death, come when he will have no terrors for me, but I must end this with a devout wish that God may yet bless him and you and that success may crown all your endeavors and between you, your poor Sister Rosalie[175] may not suffer. At least she is half your sister and God forbid my dear Henry that we should visit upon the living the errors of the dead. Believe me Dear Henry we take an affectionate interest in your destinies and our United Prayers will be that the God of Heaven will bless and protect you. Rely on him my Brave and excellent Boy who is ready to save to the uttermost. May he keep you in Danger, preserve you always is the prayer of your

Friend & Servant
(JOHN ALLAN)

[175] In the *Ellis & Allan Papers,* from which this letter is taken, are found about this time nine charges by John Allan against both Edgar and Rosalie for small amounts of postage.

On the back of the copy of this note, there is characteristically enough, a calculation for compound interest of a certain sum at six per cent in the same pious hand.[176]

Perhaps the cold palm which Edgar had felt upon his brow was not altogether a dream. To be able in the same breath to defend oneself, by endeavoring to cause dissension between brothers, while casting a slur on the mother of the same youth on whose head the divine blessing is invoked — and to calmly turn over the same sheet of paper and calculate the amount of compound interest due, is to proclaim oneself in the possession of qualities which, if not human, are certainly not divine. Such was evidently the spirit of the man who devoutly consigned the future of the Poe orphans to the mercy of God.

Keeping the spiritual vista thus opened to us by John Allan's own pen in mind, his more mundane proceedings can now be chronicled. The old house at the corner of Fourteenth Street and Tobacco Alley once more comes into view. It had been left John Allan as part of the Galt estate, and to it the family now moved once again for a while, but not for long. It is this house, still standing, with which the most intimate and earliest memories of Poe must be associated when thinking of his boyhood in Richmond. Strangely enough it has been almost overlooked, doubtless eclipsed by the traditions of Edgar Poe which gathered about a grander and more impressive mansion to which the family next removed.

Naturally enough the inheritance received from William Galt in 1825 changed the social outlook and the mode of life of John Allan and his family. Coincident with the turn for the better in their circumstances there had been, despite Mrs. Allan's precarious health, an increase in the round of social gaieties, and the old house at Fourteenth Street, so convenient from a business standpoint, was found inadequate for their different needs.[177]

[176] Photostat of this letter in the possession of the author. The letter was a copy kept in the *Ellis & Allan Files*, the original, of course, having gone to Henry Poe. No doubt the copy was retained to show to Edgar. The copy is unsigned, but is in John Allan's own hand.

[177] William Galt's will was signed March 25, 1825 and probated March 29, 1825. The house at Tobacco Alley and Fourteenth Street was a bequest to John Allan. See appendix III.

On June 28, 1825, only three months after the probating of his uncle's will, Mr. Allan bought at auction a large house on the southeast corner of Main and Fifth Streets for the sum of $14,950.[178] It was a good bargain as the former owner had paid $19,100 for it, but died before he completed payments. The house had been built by David Meade Randolph, but was afterward purchased and much improved by Señor Joseph Gallego, a rich Andalusian merchant of Richmond, who had indulged his Spanish fancy for landscaping by planting a double garden below the house; that on the east being for vegetables, while the slope of the hill on the south, which the house overlooked, was green with abundantly bearing grape-vines, fig trees, and raspberry bushes; nor were flowers, vines, and shrubs lacking with bloom and sweet scent. Here was a garden, indeed, for a certain young poet who loved flowers, and was doubtless not averse to figs.

In this house, since torn down, occurred the most momentous passages of Poe's early life; it is forever connected with his name and that of John Allan in Richmond; some of its furnishings have achieved a permanent place in our literature, and to it, in his thoughts, Israfel forever returned "home." In view of this, a description of it, as a background for the life he led there, will assume more than an antiquarian interest.

From its windows there was a magnificent sweep of scenery to be seen, a view of the valley of the James stretching away into Henrico and Chesterfield Counties, and of Manchester, on the south bank, then a delightful little village. This with its bridges, its islands, its river, falls, meadows, woods and hamlets was the country of Poe's boyhood. The generous doorway of the mansion opened into a spacious hall, on the right of which was the morning reception and tea room. Just across the hall from the front room was the dining room, octagon in shape, and beautifully lighted. On the second floor was the large octagon parlor or ball room, famous for many a brilliant affair, while John Allan's own chamber was immediately over the front door, with windows that overlooked the drive and front yard. On the same floor were three

[178] Letter of Col. Thomas Ellis to George E. Woodberry dated Baltimore, May 28, 1884.

other bedrooms, one occupied by Miss Valentine, another spare room for guests, and a third which was Edgar's.

Poe's room was at the end of a hall that ended in a wedge-shaped alcove just beyond a rather dark twist in the stairs.[179] In this recess, so that it protruded somewhat beyond the door, was a table upon which stood an *agate lamp,* always kept burning at night, because of the dark stairs and hall. On this table it was Poe's habit to throw his coat as he entered the room. The chamber had two windows, one fronting north, and one east with an extensive view, for at that time there were no other buildings upon Mr. Allan's square. There was in addition to the usual bedroom furniture, a comfortable lounge where Poe loved to lie and read; a table for his books; and a wardrobe well furnished — we hear of occasions upon which young visitors to the house were supplied with extra clothing from Edgar's store. This, especially, must have been grateful to Poe, who was at this time by way of being a bit of a dandy, — neat and careful of his rather distinguished person at all times, except when in the clutches of poverty later on, or during one of his sprees. In short, his appearance was always a barometer of his mental and financial condition. By inclination and training he was orderly in his living and punctilious about his dress.

We are told by one who had often been there, that against the walls of Poe's bedroom in the Allan house was a modest shelf of books, and at this time there would certainly have been more in his father's library. In view of the fact that many of these books must have been instrumental in shaping the man's imagination, it is interesting to speculate what volumes may have been there. Nor is this a mere guess, books were infinitely less numerous then than they are now, literary taste was more fixed, and the sources of the boy's lines in his first volume of poetry, most of which goes back to Richmond or University days, are often quite obvious.

[179] For some of the details as to Poe's room in the Allan house I am indebted to a Richmond antiquary, to the recollections of Thomas Bolling, a visitor to Poe's room, and to articles still preserved at the Poe Shrine in Richmond and elsewhere, and to the letter of Col. Thomas Ellis to Prof. Woodberry — see note 178.



The Allan House, "Moldavia"

At the corner of Fifth and Main Streets, Richmond, Virginia

The home of JOHN ALLAN's better fortunes, connected with some of the most intimate and important events in the life of EDGAR ALLAN POE

From a photograph originally in the possession of Ingram, Poe's English biographer



John Allan

The foster-father or guardian of Edgar Allan Poe

From a portrait by an unknown artist, probably painted after *Mr.* ALLAN inherited his uncle's fortune

Photograph of the picture

Courtesy of the Edgar Allan Poe Shrine, Richmond, Virginia

On the shelves and table of his room where he studied there were, of course, his text books, among them some of the classics, Homer, Virgil, Cæsar, Cicero, and Horace. There would have been old grammars, dog-eared spellers, readers, and French readers, — some of them perhaps brought back from England, — English and American histories, some of the Gothic Romances, and probably a manual or two on military tactics. Byron, Moore and Wordsworth we may be sure were present, with Coleridge and Keats, and more doubtfully Shelley, certainly some of the old Eighteenth Century poets with which the libraries of Southern gentlemen were so liberally stocked. *Don Quixote, Gil Blas* and *Joe Miller* we hear of later in a letter. Milton was there, the boy knew him, Burns, of course — Mr. Allan was a Scotchman. Campbell and Kirke White can be added to the list and perhaps E. C. Pinkney.[180]

Of novelists, Poe would by this time have come across Scott, Cooper, Charles Brockden Brown, and some of the earlier things of Irving, and he would have made the acquaintance of Macaulay and other English essayists and reviewers in the pages of the *Edinburgh Review,* and *Blackwood's* which were largely subscribed to in Richmond. Certainly he must have read the poetical effusions of local and contemporary, but now long forgotten, "bards" and "bardesses" in both the American and British periodicals and newspapers of the day.

There is direct evidence of an abundance of these. Richmond and his father were in close touch with England through foreign trade and family relations, and one of the obliging side issues of the firm of *Ellis & Allan* was to act as agents for subscriptions to newspapers and other publications. During part of the firm's history it handled popular London periodicals and even sheet music. These were kept upon the second floor of the *Ellis & Allan* establishment, and Poe's fondness for the spot was a matter of note. Although the boy was rather shy, it was remembered that upon occasions he would recite some favorite poem to those about the place. Among the periodicals which Poe is known to have

[180] For the last three names I am indebted to Dr. Thomas Ollive Mabbott.

seen there beyond all peradventure, were the London *Critical Review of Annals of Literature* from 1791 to 1803 in thirty-nine bound volumes, and the *London Ladies' Magazine* for the same period bound in thirty volumes. Moore, Byron and Goldsmith seem to have greatly interested him.[181] Along with the rest of the world he must have been familiar with Scott. This together with the books in the libraries and upon the tables of his friends, his formal instruction at school, but, above all, the stock of volumes and periodicals over the offices of his " father's " firm, seems to have constituted for the most part the literary background of Edgar Allan Poe. For that time, at least, it was by no means a scant one. He was an accurate and omniverous reader.

Frances Allan furnished the new house lavishly but in good taste. There were many rich hangings and some busts by Canova of Dante and Mary Magdeline, both of which seemed to have remained in Poe's mind. The furniture was in a graceful late Empire style with gilt brass inlay. Poe seems to have had a desk in his room, or at least a table, upon which was a handsome brass inkstand and sand-caster, purchased by his foster-father and marked " John Allan '13." [182] These Poe afterward took with him among the few things which he carried from John Allan's home, and kept them by him for a long time.

The most delightful feature of the new dwelling, however, was the long portico extending the full depth of the house. The reception and dining room opened out upon it on the first floor, and Mr. Allan's room and the parlor upstairs. Here through the long Virginia Spring, Summer, and Fall the family spent most of their time together with their constant guests. There was " a splendid swing " on the upstairs porch, and a telescope through which the young folks, particularly, loved to peep at the stars and the country across the James. Through its lenses the eyes of young

[181] Prof. Killis Campbell is to be credited with extracting many of these facts from the *Ellis & Allan Papers*. I am also in possession of book and newspaper lists ordered by the firm. J. H. Whitty, *Complete Poems*, large edition, page 200, also notes.

[182] Now in possession of the Bucks County Historical Society at Doylestown, Pennsylvania, with an interesting record of their history. The style of the furniture shows that the house was furnished by Frances Allan about 1825.

Israfel first became familiar with those stars and constellations, the lovely names of which are strewn through his poetry, and, while his passion for astronomical and cosmic speculations was being aroused, through the same glass he became familiar with the quaint face and the dead mystery of the moon.[183,761]

But not all of Poe's time during the Spring and Summer of 1825 was spent reading in his room or at *Ellis & Allan,* swinging on the porch, or peering through telescopes. There was other and more serious game afoot.

[183] See the *Adventure of Hans Pfaall, The Balloon Hoax.* In the latter story Poe's knowledge of astronomical perspective is mathematically correct. The mathematics of the stars interested him as well as their poetical names. Poe certainly knew sufficient mathematics to navigate.

CHAPTER VIII
Elmira and the Enchanted Garden

WHERE "Linden Row" now stands in Richmond, Virginia, at the corner of Franklin and Second Streets, there was once a beautiful garden that Edgar Poe loved more than well.[184] Even its story was romantic. Thomas Jefferson had once sought to use the space of ground that it occupied in order to erect a prison in which to carry out one of his favorite theories in regard to the reform of prisoners, but one Colonel Thomas Rutherford arranged to exchange the property, and under the care of well trained gardeners the spot became one of the most beautiful on a once lovely old street. The prisoners which dwelt behind its high brick wall were roses, honeysuckle, jasmine, and the flowering myrtle.

From childhood it had been familiar to Israfel, who on his way to and from school, or on play-larks with little Tom Ellis, caught the scent of Southern Spring as it drifted over the old walls, arresting passers-by with its perfumed invitation from many flowers, and inviting them to leave the white sunshine in the quiet, warm streets, and tarry for a while amid its green coolness.

Charles Ellis, of *Ellis & Allan,* lived just across the street on the opposite corner, in the long frame house with five dormer-windows and double chimneys where the Allans had visited after their return from England.[184] From the front windows, the whole of the block across the street stretched away in a green and flowered vista, musical with birds, a labyrinth of mystery for childhood, and a seat of shade for old age. The place was tended by Mr. Ellis's gardener [185] and must have been a favorite haunt for the solitary hours beloved by Poe.

[184] See Chapter VI, page 95.

[185] In Poe's story, *The Landscape Garden,* the hero is "Ellison, my young friend." It now appears that the land upon which this garden was situated actually belonged to Poe's guardian, for in William Galt's will among other bequests to John Allan is, "my vacant lot corner of F and 2nd Streets, opposite the residence of Charles Ellis." See appendix III.

In his story, *The Landscape Garden,* he has left us the unperishable memory of its delights in the form of a phantasy upon the art of landscape gardening, and in a half homesick mood afterward recalls it by a quotation from Giles Fletcher:

> The garden like a lady fair was cut,
> That lay as if she slumbered in delight,
> And to the open skies her eyes did shut;
> The azure fields of heaven were 'sembled right
> In a large round set with flowers of light;
> The flowers de luce, and the round sparks of dew
> That hung upon their azure leaves did show
> Like twinkling stars that sparkle in the evening blue.

Here was a retreat, indeed, where he could forget the world of docks and ships along the river banks below, and the interminable babble of prices and merchandising at his foster-father's counter and table. For Edgar Poe, it was the setting and the background of a world of dreams.

" Helen " was dead, but Israfel was still moving in the world of men; he looked about him and saw that their daughters were fair, and he walked with them in the enchanted garden. It was there that he brought Sarah Elmira Royster and whispered to her through her tangle of unforgettable curls. She was one of the first, and was destined to be the last, love of a life star-crossed by many women.

Elmira, for by that name the young lady was known, was the daughter of one of the neighbors.[186] She at one time lived just across the street from Edgar's school.[187] Propinquity at any rate was present. Young Poe was not one to overlook the charming because they were near, and at the time she " swims into our ken " she was about fifteen and dowered with a trim little figure, an appealing mouth, large black eyes, and long, dark, chestnut hair. The combination was irresistible to Poe.

He had probably known her since 1823, certainly during 1824,

[186] The Roysters were well known to both John Allan and Charles Ellis. This connection afterward was probably fatal to Poe's hopes. Miss Royster became Mrs. Shelton. In 1810 I find that the Roysters loaned money to John Allan, charged to his personal account. *Ellis & Allan Papers* — a receipt dated Richmond, December 22, 1810.

[187] Old Richmond directory.

and after the gloom of " Helen's " passing and during the days of change and trouble in the Allan household, the walks with Elmira, or " Myra," as he called her, along the quiet streets of old Richmond, or in the woods and fields about, must have been a balm, and have brought a glow of strange unwonted happiness to his lonely heart.

But it was to the enchanted garden above all that he brought her, to sit there in the myrtle shades, and talk to her about his love and dreams. Here it was that he recalled her, in the troubled days of aftertimes. Looking back, the dream seemed idyllic, and the light that lay upon it with such peculiar glory, he has caught up and left for us in some of his finest lines:

> Thou wast that all to me, love,
> For which my soul did pine —
> A green isle in the sea, love,
> A fountain and a shrine,
> All wreathed with fairy fruits and flowers,
> And all the flowers were mine. . . .
>
> And all my days are trances
> And all my nightly dreams
> Are where thy dark eye glances,
> And where thy footstep gleams —
> In what ethereal dances,
> By what eternal streams. . . .

The stuff that dreams are made of, in the case of Poe, has had a strange power of congealing. The garden, its brick walls, its roses and Elmira, have long vanished into the gulf that waits for all things, but as a memorial to the poet's dream, and to the fresh young beauty of the little girl who would have been Poe's wife if Fate had not intervened, there has arisen a memorial [188] nearby, which like its original, the enchanted garden, is also

> a fountain and a shrine.

Before John Allan moved to the mansion of his better circumstances on Main and Fifth Streets, the Roysters lived in a frame

[188] The Edgar Allan Poe Shrine in the Old Stone House, Main Street, Richmond, Virginia, is one of the best conceived and most beautiful memorials to literary genius in the United States.

house still standing across lots, or as it was then, across gardens, on Second Street. From Edgar's window where he was then living to the back of Elmira's house there was at that time an unbroken view, and it was the custom of the two young lovers to conduct a handkerchief flirtation, Edgar from his window, and Elmira from the casement at the head of the landing on the stairs. One can imagine their hearts fluttering with every wave of the white signals, and Elmira must have looked up many a night and seen the lamp glowing in the room of the young boy she loved. Nor were these signals purely sentimental. From after events it is known that Mr. Royster did not look too favorably upon the obvious attentions of young Poe, and certainly John Allan's sympathy must at this time have been, to say the least, attenuated.

But the canny Scot along with the other increased ambitions and more impressive mode of life which his Uncle's fortune brought into prospect, seems to have changed somewhat his plans for the education of Edgar. Up until the receipt of the Galt estate in 1825, it is probable that if John Allan had any plans at all for the future of his brilliant young foster-child, they centered about the store and warehouse of *Ellis & Allan,* where the practical-minded merchant probably visualized Edgar Poe as occupying a stool and working his way up to a possible share in the business, or to the point where he could start out on a mercantile career of his own, as he and Charles Ellis had done years before. Nor was it by any means an unkindly vista. That Edgar was much employed about the store, we know, and that he occasionally served behind the counter as a dry-goods clerk, or as a messenger carrying papers and valuables to and fro, was afterward recalled by many who saw him there. Of the use to which he put the book and periodical department we have already seen. Here he also met the book lovers, journalists, and literati of the town, and occasionally favored the clerks and customers about the place with the recitation of some favorite poem, a song — for he sang well — or a conversation upon literature, the world of which had become known to him in the articles and reviews between the covers of the magazine counter stock of *Ellis & Allan.* There is no record of his being carried upon the firm's payrolls, though. Quite reason-

ably enough, his guardian seems to have charged up his small services against his board and keep. Whatever pocket money he had, came from his " Ma " and " Aunt Nancy," their generosity, as his companions and schoolmates testify, supplied him with a more than usual amount which seems to have been as easily and generously spent as it was given.

So far, Poe had received as good an education as any boy in Richmond. With the new house, and the higher social status to which his " father " aspired, seems to have come a different idea as to the possible future and training of the foster-son. Edgar's abilities at declamation, and his leaning toward literature and the world of the intellect, may have caused John Allan to ponder the manifest advantages of a professional career, the law,[189] with perhaps the halls of Congress in view; nor was he, it is only right to say, oblivious to the remarkable qualities of Edgar's mind. There was another factor, too. A course at the University would take him out of the house, and out of the house for reasons that we have seen, Mr. Allan was very anxious at this time that the foster-son should go. At any rate, the University began to be talked of, and in March, 1825, Edgar Poe was removed from Master Burke's school.[190] He was put under the care of private tutors with an early entrance at the University of Virginia directly in view.

Of the interviews with John Allan and of his life about the warehouse of *Ellis & Allan* together with the provincial and mercantile clap-trap of the conversation enjoyed there, Poe has left us a neat but sardonic picture in the thinly disguised autobiographical satire of *The Literary Life of Thingum Bob, Esq.* — nor does he forget in an amused way to hint at his own naïve literary aspirations. With even a small knowledge of his life in Richmond about this time, the whole thing is reasonably clear. Even his middle name with the ironical thoughts it afterwards occasioned, creeps into the satire.

Of one's *very* remote ancestors it is superfluous to say much.[191] My

[189] Both Poe and Mr. Allan specifically mention " law " in later correspondence.
[190] Woodberry, 1909, vol. I, page 29.
[191] A covert reference to his real parents seems quite evident.

father Thomas Bob, Esq., stood for many years at the summit of his profession, which was that of a merchant barber,[192] in the city of Smug. His warehouse was the resort of all the principal people of the place, and especially the editorial corps — a body [193] which inspires all about it with profound veneration and awe. For my own part, I regarded them as gods, and drank in with avidity the rich wit and wisdom which continuously flowed from their august mouths during the process of what is called " lather." My first moment of positive inspiration must be dated from that ever-memorable epoch, when the brilliant conductor of the *Gad Fly,*[194] in the intervals of the important process just mentioned, recited aloud, before a conclave of our apprentices, an inimitable poem in honor of the " Only Genuine Oil-of-Bob " (so called from its talented inventor, my father,) and for which occasion the editor of the *Fly* was remunerated with a regal liberality by the firm of Thomas Bob & Company, merchant-barbers.[195]

The genius of the stanzas of the " Oil-of-Bob " first breathed into me, I say, the divine *afflatus*. I resolved at once to become a great man, and to commence by becoming a great poet. That very evening I fell upon my knees at the feet of my father.

" Father," I said, " pardon me! — but I have a soul above lather. It is my firm intention to cut the shop. I would be an editor — I would be a poet — I would pen stanzas to the ' Oil-of-Bob.' Pardon me and aid me to be great! "

" My dear Thingum," replied my father (I had been christened Thingum after a wealthy relative so surnamed), " My dear Thingum," he said, raising me from my knees by the ears — " Thingum, my boy, you're a trump and take after your father in having a soul. You have an immense head, too, and it must hold a great many brains.[196] This I have long seen and had thoughts of making you a lawyer. The business, however, has grown ungenteel, and that of politician don't pay. Upon the whole you judge wisely; — the trade of editor is best — and if you can be a poet at the same time — as most of the editors are, by the by, — why you will kill two birds with one stone. To encourage you in the beginning of things, I will allow you a garret; pen, ink, and paper, a rhyming dictionary, and a copy of the *Gad-Fly*. I suppose you would scarcely demand any more."

192 *I.e.,* a merchant who gave his customers a close shave.

193 Poe had all the delight of the day in puns. Like Keats he revelled in them.

194 A reference to Poe himself and his editorial criticisms that stung deeply, and his recitations of poetry about the office.

195 No salary was given him by the " close shaving " firm hence the irony.

196 A study of Poe's portraits will make this literal description of himself plain.

"I would be an ungrateful villain if I did," [197] I replied with enthusiasm. "Your generosity is boundless. I will repay it by making you the father of a genius."

And he did!

Here we have the whole bucketful in a thimble, the cursory allusion to his real parents, "the remote ancestors of whom it is superfluous to say much," "my father, the close-shaving merchant," the cheap lather of conversation about the warehouse, the Genuine Oil-of-Bob of family pride, and the applause of the clerks which aroused Poe's ambition — and John Allan — "raising me from my knees by the ears." It is all quite palpable, and very, very tragic. How could he demand more than a garret, pen and paper; would he not be an "ungrateful villain" if he did?

John Allan had provided the garret, the pen and paper, the clothes, and the food. That as he grew older he was incapable of providing more for "the immense head that must hold a great many brains," and for the heart that was beating so highly and proudly, was the beginning of a tragedy that has had no end.[198] The duel between these two giants, for they were both that, and duel it was, echoes even now in a subtle way in the melancholy and morbid cast of much of Poe's work. Without a thorough understanding of the relations of these two extraordinary men there can be no comprehension whatever of the motions of Poe. For almost a full half of its life one of the most delicately adjusted and sensitively organized nervous systems that the world has ever seen was subject to the ceaseless and exacting dominance of a potent, a massive and a gigantically virile will. It was not *Ariel* at the beck of *Caliban,* the colors will not stand that, but it was *Hamlet* fostered by a northern *Shylock,* a central fact in Poe's life that the world, which is seldom subtle, will probably not take the trouble to understand.

The relation of father and son is one that has been left strangely undisected in our literature, while its feminine counterpart has been unduly exploited. In John Allan *vs.* Edgar Poe the

[197] "Ungrateful" was John Allan's favorite reproach of Poe.

[198] From his influence upon Poe's life, John Allan becomes automatically one of the great secondary characters of literary annals.

perturbations of father and son were raised by circumstances to the *n*th degree of possibilities — and the result was in proportion to the cause. The relation between them was one of the most perplexed, complicated, and subtle in the whole range of life or literature, and therefore doubly hard to understand. But it is also one of the most interesting, for as always in the case of Poe, it was cast dramatically and carried in its involved ramifications, domestic secrets, hidden and damaging letters, unforgiving pride, and the sorrow and death of a beautiful woman beloved by both of them. As we have already taken some pains to look at the physical furnishings in the Allan house, let us for a few moments retire behind the arras.

When John Allan permitted his wife to take the infant Edgar Poe into her house and arms, it was, as we have seen, on his part, reluctantly. Once the fact was accomplished, however, it must also be said that his acceptance of it was more than generous. The child, and John Allan was fond of children, seems to have undoubtedly crept very deeply into his affections, to such an extent that there can be little doubt that for many years he accepted him as his son. In England he went by his foster-father's name, and John Allan made statements to his Scotch relatives that can only indicate that he regarded him then as his heir. Tradition as to Mrs. Allan's coddling and Mr. Allan's undue severity with frequent corporal punishments, in reality means little. Frances Allan was a childless woman whose indulgence her husband corrected in the universal manner of mankind. In plain English, Edgar was probably a naughty and wilful little boy who took no harm from being spanked. The situation thus created, however, grew more serious later as a basis for a dangerous family alignment, one which John Allan could not help but resent more than if the boy had been his own. The charges that the older man wounded the pride of the boy by constantly reminding him of his dependence upon charity are more serious, and from much direct testimony appear to be true.

As they grew older, the gulf between their temperaments began to widen. Most men, even of a thick fiber, have a tenderness and fondness, though a hidden one, for little children. Edgar's beauty

and " his vivacious ways " no doubt appealed for a while to John Allan. As the boy became more of the man, the natural indifference and antagonism of male for male began to play its part in his foster-father's attitude. There was, too, probably unknown to them both, a jealousy for the affection of Frances Allan so strongly concentrated on Edgar, one which even a real father sometimes experiences, as his part in the life of the woman is replaced by the advent of children; and in John Allan's case this was accentuated by the actual fact of the extra parentage of the child.

As he increased in years, the older man seems to have lost, as often happens, some of the more endearing and easily youthful sides of his nature which he undoubtedly, at one time, possessed; and he became harder-grained, closer, short-tempered and obstinate. Quite incapable, in short, of appreciating the possibilities in the more delicate aspects of Edgar, and perhaps dissatisfied in a certain way with his wife. He had wronged her, but by that very fact he knew the reason why he had no legitimate children; as he became less attached to Edgar and the possessor of a great estate, he was more than ever desirous of a natural heir. In the meantime, while his wife's affections for young Poe increased with the fine promise of Edgar's young manhood, his own had waned. This seems to have been about the situation when he fell heir to the Galt fortune, and to have warranted Poe later in his statement that, " He treated me as kindly as his gross nature would permit." Edgar had been provided with a home and education — the garret and the pens and ink — but he missed in his foster-father what was of much more importance to a boy of genius, the sympathy and understanding of a generously responding temperament.

The situation was tragic and, as is nearly always the case, an ironical one. Into the house of a hard-headed, literal and commercially-minded Scotch merchant, the eccentricities of Fate had introduced one of the most cunningly and highly strung instruments that has ever trembled to the delicate breath of song, combined with an esthetic ego that later could not bear to contemplate the idea that even God was its superior. Add to this, the

ugly noise of domestic dissension under the stress of secret sorrow, and the curious stage is set for an inevitable tragedy, a favorite one of the Infernal Mimes, known as the " Breaking Heart of Youth."

For it was not mere incompatibility of natures that brought about the inevitable; *that,* perhaps, as in many an other family, might have spent itself in minor ways, but sometime between the return of the family from England and La Fayette's visit to Richmond, Frances Allan seems to have become aware of her husband's unfaithfulness, and the knowledge which was then or afterward shared by Edgar, brought the two together in an aggrieved compact that was inevitably against, and probably supremely exasperating to, John Allan. Miss Valentine's position as a dependent upon her brother-in-law's bounty was anomalous, but it is not hard to guess where her sympathies lay, and upon occasions they must have shown. But this was by no means all.

When Mrs. Poe, Edgar's mother, died, John Allan had come into the possession of her letters, and, among these, there was some family secret that was extremely damaging to the Poes. Mrs. Clemm, Poe's mother-in-law, said that years later she destroyed the correspondence after her " Eddie " died, in order to keep the fact from ever becoming known to the world.[199] Just what it was, can therefore never be proven, but there is a strong suspicion that it in some way compromised David or Elizabeth Poe and dealt with the paternity of Rosalie. In the family scenes which occurred, for under the conditions they were bound to, it was this secret which John Allan reserved to add the last sting to the reproaches of ingratitude, which he heaped on the foster-son who now dared to sympathize with her whom he had come to regard as his mother. No scribe was present to record this as a fact for posterity, but what John Allan had written albeit shamefacedly, in a letter to Henry Poe,[200] he would scarcely in his rage withhold from Edgar. To have stones cast at his dead mother

199 See the mention of these letters Chapter II, page 4, note 41.

200 Letter of John Allan to William Henry Leonard Poe, quoted page 125, *ante,* " God forbid, my dear Henry," etc.

and his little sister, from the hands of one who should have been the last to throw them, was something which no lad of spirit could stand. That Edgar replied ably, and perhaps out of all bounds, is a warrantable guess.

In the Spring of 1824, Mrs. Stanard had died; Mrs. Allan's health was failing through sorrow or some other cause; and the gloom in the privacy of John Allan's house must have been quiet and deep, when it was not stormy. A few months later, we find John Allan writing Henry Poe that Edgar is moody and adding, hypocritically enough, " I cannot imagine what *we* have done to deserve this." [200] There is not a word of pride over Edgar's escorting La Fayette, or of his excellent record at school. Only a vague and irritated reproach. In the light of all the facts, it can now only seem that the letter to Baltimore was a gesture of precaution, on the part of John Allan, and a deliberate attempt to malign Edgar Poe.

Sometime in the Summer of 1825, however, Henry paid a visit to his brother Edgar in the new house on Main Street. Doubtless the brothers had much to talk about. They had seen each other at most, only upon two or three occasions before. Some of the contents of John Allan's letter may well have been on their minds. Henry, it seems, was considerably upset and impressed by the inuendoes, and as late as 1827 published in the *North American* in Baltimore a poem entitled *Lines on a Pocket Book* in which " Rosalie " is addressed as being of doubtful paternity. This poem constitutes the closest approach to an explanation of the Poe family mystery that exists.[201]

William Henry Leonard Poe was a rather delicate and tubercularly inclined boy of some literary promise, as his few published poems show. He and Edgar may have had a good deal in common and enjoyed each other's society. It was only upon rare occasions that Poe could " open up " with the freedom and confidence that a blood relative of sympathetic temperament inspires. At this time Henry Poe seems to have been in the Navy or the merchant marine. On this visit to Richmond he wore a nautical

[201] See *Poe's Brother*, by Hervey Allen and Thomas Ollive Mabbott, Doran, 1926.

uniform and, upon one occasion at least, in company with Ebenezer Burling, the boys called upon Elmira Royster. If Rosalie came over from the Mackenzies' to visit her two big brothers, it was one of the few occasions upon which the children of Elizabeth Poe sat together in the same room.

Rosalie was at this time a dull and undeveloped little girl of about fourteen or fifteen. She could have been in her condition only an annoyance and a sorrow to Edgar Poe. He was on close terms of friendship with the Mackenzies, whose kindness and care of Rosalie had continued, and was a frequent visitor in their house. Mrs. Mackenzie he often called " Ma," and upon several occasions was heard to remark that he wished he had been adopted by them instead of the Allans, words which could not have failed to reach his guardian's, by this time, burning ears. About this time, too, it is said he began to talk to the Mackenzies about running away to sea, and to complain frequently of Mr. Allan.[202] To the Mackenzies, Mr. Allan replied that Edgar did not know what gratitude was. Nevertheless, Mrs. Allan and Mrs. Mackenzie were still fast friends and continued so till the end.

Through the Summer and Autumn of 1825 Edgar Poe continued this work with tutors, looking forward to his entrance at the University of Virginia. Despite the trouble in the background, he could not have eluded a certain joy in the new variety of contacts in the life which surrounded him now in the new house. The Allans, as part of the social campaign for the position to which their wealth now entitled them, gave many entertainments and the house was noted for its hospitality. John Allan's generosity in the manner of his way of life is not to be impugned. Thomas Ellis speaks of the many young folks and children who ran in and out, to peep through the telescope, or to see Edgar. Doubtless Elmira's curls were no strange sight in the garden on the slope of the hill when the grapes were ripe. An arbor is an excellent place to exchange kisses. Poe seems to have idolized

202 New light is thrown on Edgar's desire to go to sea by the fact that, shortly after the visit to Richmond noted above, Henry sailed as a midshipman (*sic*) on the U.S.S. " Macedonian " for South America. See note 201.

her, and a study of the changes in the text of *Tamerlane* will result in some interesting speculations about this little girl.[203]

Poe's family moved in the best of Richmond society. Some of John Allan's neighbors were Thomas Taylor, whose daughter William Galt married; Mr. Joseph Tate, Major James Gibbon, Mr. Joseph Marx and Thomas Gilliat. "These gentlemen were of the highest social position in Richmond" and were associates of Chief Justice Marshall, Colonel Ambler, Dr. Brockenbrough, Judge Cabell, Judge Stanard and others, famous for good dinners and whist parties. In such houses young Poe was welcome, and the associations of such an environment stamped upon him the attitude and the mode of conversation of a gentleman. It was the Virginia of the Old School, a school for manners.

Doubtless the possibility of Edgar's being Mr. Allan's heir did not escape the speculation of certain mamas with eligible daughters, young people married early then, but young Poe was becoming more and more interested in Elmira and the visits to her house were frequent. From her lips we get a fresh and vivid account of Israfel.[203]

It was Edgar's habit, during the Summer and Fall of 1825, to slip over to the Royster House nearby and to spend long hours in the parlor with Elmira. She played the piano and they would sing together, Edgar in a fresh young tenor voice, or he would accompany her upon the flute which he played quite well. Sometimes, but not often, Ebenezer Burling would go along. But Elmira does not seem to have cared much for him. The conversation was of the news of the younger set of the day. Once, upon her repeating a brisk remark of a young lady acquaintance, Poe replied that he was surprised that Elmira would associate with anyone so unladylike. Years later she remembered this. There must also have been certain moments upon the sofa, or upon the window seat on the landing upstairs, when the conversation was of a decidedly endearing nature and more than mere words were

[203] In the accounts of Elmira (Mrs. Shelton) and her accounts of Poe, I have followed carefully the letters from her to Ingram, published in his biography of Poe, and other letters of interviews with Mrs. Shelton by Edward V. Valentine of Richmond, later sent to Ingram and now at the University of Virginia. Some of these latter have never been published.



After a pencil sketch of Sarah Elmira Royster
By Edgar Allan Poe. From the collection of
Charles G. Barney of Richmond, Va., and coming
direct from Mrs. S. E. Shelton.

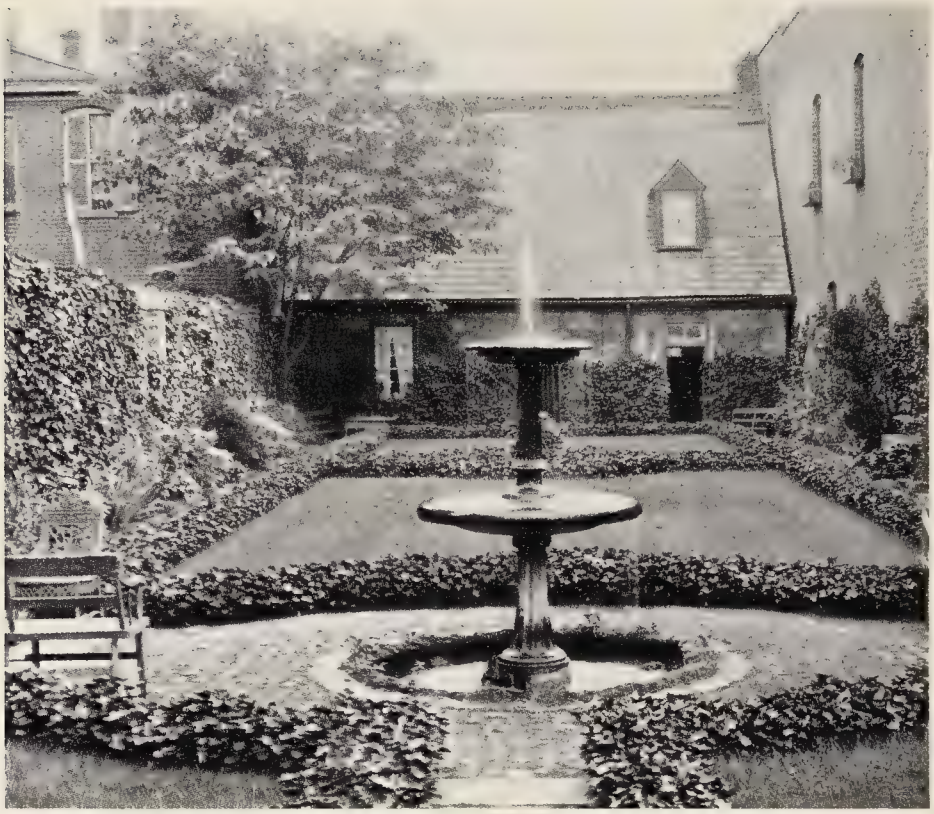
Sarah Elmira Royster at Fifteen

Poe's own sketch of his Sweetheart

Made in the parlor of the Royster House in Richmond, Virginia, in 1826
MISS ROYSTER is the heroine of *Tamerlane*

The little girl who was engaged to POE just before he left for the University in 1826. In 1849 *Miss* ROYSTER, then *Mrs.* SHELTON and a widow, again promised to marry POE. His death in Baltimore in 1849 prevented the consummation of the early romance of his youth

Courtesy of the Edgar Allan Poe Shrine, Richmond, Virginia



"A Fountain and a Shrine"

Garden and Fountain of the Edgar Allan Poe Shrine, Richmond, Virginia

Showing the rear of the "Old Stone House" fronting on Main Street not far from where *Mrs.* Poe died

The Poe Shrine at Richmond is the legitimate center of interest and activity in preserving material and relics connected with Edgar Allan Poe, and in perpetuating his memory

exchanged, for before Poe left for the University, Elmira had promised to be his wife. A promise which was kept a secret, probably on account of the parental attitude toward the match.

Elmira said that Poe was shy but very handsome, with large dark grey eyes and rather august manners. In short, we get the feeling that little Elmira was carried off her feet by quite an impressive and princely young man. There was talk of books and poetry, and perhaps some verses in Elmira's album,[204] the custom of the day, and when other amusements failed, Edgar drew pictures and sketches for his sweetheart. One of these, a portrait of Elmira herself by Poe's own hand, has come down to us as a record of some of the happiest hours of his life. One can imagine the little girl sitting on the sofa in the Royster parlor, the sheets of music and the flute lying upon the open pianoforte, while Edgar Poe, pencil in hand, sketched the wistful little face that still looks out at us from the yellow paper, after more than a hundred years. There is certainly a very fetching flaunt to the tangle of pretty curls. One can almost hear their fresh voices blending in *The Last Rose of Summer,* through the half-open window; or the tinkle of the piano and the low bubbling notes of the flute.

Mrs. Allan does not seem to have looked upon Edgar's approaching departure with anything but sorrow. Doubtless, her husband's anxiety to have Edgar out of the house could not be concealed, and she may have had a feminine foreboding that it was the beginning of the end. Her health was rapidly failing, and the thought of being left alone in the house, to confront the Scotch harshness of her masterful husband, was probably more than she could bear. Perhaps she had some inkling of his future intentions as to Edgar, and knew that although his means for charity were now ample, the will for bounty had run out. That it was a gloomy time, the servants have testified. The antagonism between John Allan and his ward was extreme. On this account, and because of her great love for Edgar, Frances Allan seems to have deferred her parting with him to the uttermost. She resolved to accompany her son to Charlottesville, and to see him

[204] This is inference. Mrs. Shelton does not say so.

settled at the University. Christmas that year, despite the ample setting at the Allan house, must have been, at best, a gloomy affair.

Of Poe's parting with John Allan there is no record. Let us hope there was a gleam of the old affection. Of admonitions and promises we can be certain. Perhaps Elmira's kisses and avowals served somewhat to soften the admonitory thumping of the lame man's cane; there was at least a fond farewell from "Aunt Nancy" Valentine. One of the new Allan carriages was ordered out, Edgar's small baggage lashed at the back, and with old Jim on the box,[205] Frances Allan and Edgar Allan Poe drove away from the great house down Main Street. The black coachman remembered that they were both very sad. It was just about Valentine's Day in February, 1826.

While they trotted along in the new family carriage, perhaps Mrs. Allan remembered another ride down Main Street, in a hired hack, some fifteen years before, and once again clasped warmly the hand of the same orphan who still sat by her side. She at least had given him all that any mother could. It was the end of the first momentous act. As Jim cracked his whip over the straining horses along the road to Charlottesville, and the spires and pillared porches of Richmond disappeared behind the snowy hills, Edgar's boyhood with its homes, and warehouses, ships, "Helen," Elmira and the Enchanted Garden, disappeared into the irrevocable past. As if in final farewell Poe entrusted a love letter for Elmira to be delivered to her by the hands of James Hill, the coachman. It was the last message which she was destined to receive from him for a long time.[206] In addition to the letter Poe left with Elmira a mother-of-pearl purse marked with her initials in which the engraver had made an error. On February the fourteenth, 1826, Poe matriculated at the University of Virginia.[207]

[205] James Hill was the name of Mr. Allan's coachman. Edward V. Valentine to the author at Richmond, July 16, 1925. The carriage belonged to Mrs. Allan having been left to her by William Galt. See his will, appendix III.

[206] J. H. Whitty *Memoir*, large edition, page xxvii.

[207] Entry in the University of Virginia *Records*.

CHAPTER IX
Israfel in Cap and Gown

THOMAS JEFFERSON, that dreamer of dreams and political-romanticist, had a great vision. From his high place of Monticello in Albermarle County, Virginia, he looked down across the green slopes of the South-West Mountains and beheld

> In the greenest of our valleys
> By good angels tenanted,
> Once a fair and stately palace —
> Radiant palace — " rear " its head
> In the monarch Thought's dominion. . . .[208]

The valley was the little vale where the hamlet of Charlottesville nestled, and the palace was his vision of the classic courts and cloisters of the University of Virginia.

During his gigantically active intellectual life, Jefferson wrote some thirty-thousand letters, and among these, not a small proportion was devoted to the bringing about of what has in the end proved to be, perhaps, his most solid and far-reaching achievement — " The Oxford of the New World." Through the barriers of the ignorant indifference of legislatures and the parsimony of selfish individuals, the mercurial eloquence of his restless pen penetrated with a Midas touch; public and private purse strings were loosened for his " Educational Fund," and in the wild heart of the Alleghanies the domes and colonnades, the serpentine walls, and the five-fold terraced campus of the new University arose as if by magic.

In October, 1823, near the close of his long career, we find Jefferson writing to his friend John Adams — " Against . . . *tedium vitae,* however, my dear friend, I am now fortunately

[208] There is no attempt here, of course, to imply that *Poe* meant these lines to apply to the University.

mounted on a hobby, which, indeed, I mounted some thirty or forty years ago, but whose amble is still sufficient to give exercise and amusement to an octogenarian writer. This is the establishment of a University for the education of all succeeding generations of youth in this Republic." [209] On Monday, March 7, 1825, this vision and hobby became a fact, when without ceremony or ostentation, the University of Virginia opened its doors and fifty youths matriculated, followed by sixty-six more during the first session.

The second session began February 1, 1826, when thirty-four students entered, who by the middle of the month had increased to one hundred and thirty-one. On St. Valentine's Day the University records show that five students matriculated, and among them is the illustrious name of Poe. The exact entry, spelling and all, is as follows:

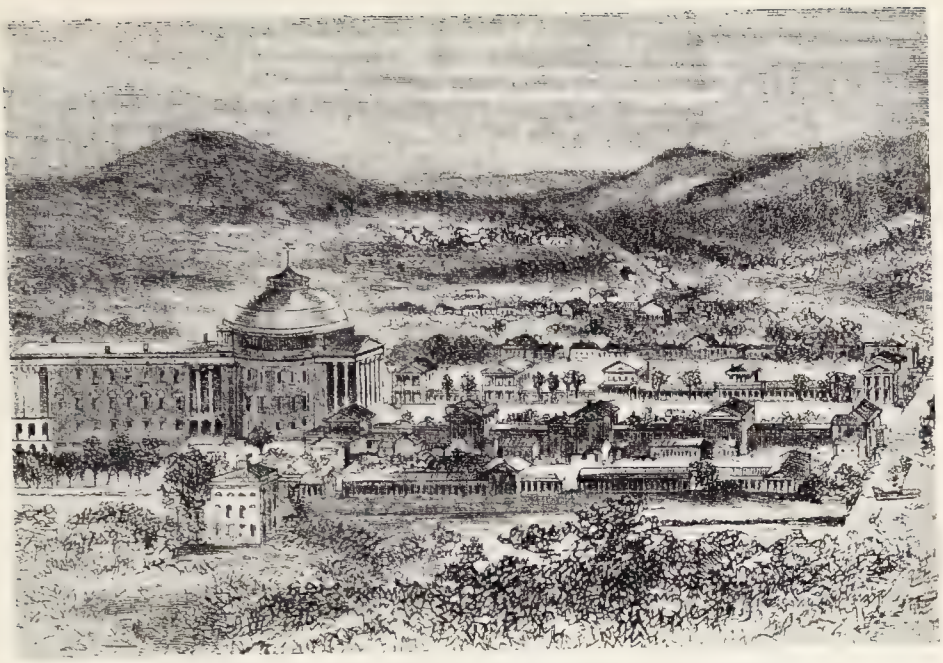
Edgar A. Poe: / 19 January, 1809 / John Allen Richmond, Va. / and the Schools of Ancient and Modern Languages.[210]

Poe's entry is number one hundred thirty-six in a total enrolment of one hundred and seventy-seven for the entire session, which ended at Christmas, 1826.[210]

Of the parting with Frances Allan nothing is known. No mother leaves her boy at a University without realizing that she has resigned her complete control, and has committed her son to the doubtful currents of adult life. The peculiar tenderness of the tie which bound her to Edgar must have wrung both their hearts, for the future was troubled. Doubtless she saw him "settled," and drove back over the cold February hills with a troubled heart to the disturbing situation in her own house at Richmond, which she must now face alone; nor could her knowledge of her foster-son's impulsive and passionate temperament have left her without forebodings about the months to follow. For the first time in his life, Poe was left completely alone. He was about to be sub-

[209] The letter is given here as it was partly quoted by Edwin A. Alderman, President of the University of Virginia, in the *Virginia Quarterly Review* for April, 1925, pages 78–84. To Dr. Alderman I am also indebted for other facts.

[210] Harrison, *Life and Letters of Edgar Allan Poe*, vol. I, page 38. Note that Poe did *not* give the place of his birth as Woodberry states vol. I, 1909, page 32. "Allen" is a misspelling, of course.



The University of Virginia in Poe's Day

West Front

From an old print



Professor George Tucker

One of the Faculty at the University of Virginia at the time Poe attended in 1826

Courtesy of the University of Virginia Alumni Association

jected to the difficult test of freedom, and the environment into which he had been thrown was not without decided temptations.

Jefferson's ideas about the University were peculiar, in some respects they were the most advanced of their age, and in others they partook of that idealistic and impractical turn of mind, which, arising from a too fond estimate of human nature, has in some of its major aspects proved almost fatal to the Republic over which the soul of the philosopher yearned. It was only by the early modification of some of his pet theories that the University was saved from anarchy.

From an educational standpoint, the organization of the new school was forward looking, a radical departure from established methods, but on the whole excellent. A highly competent and learned faculty had been cajoled by the glowing letters of the "Old Man Eloquent" into lending the luster of their foreign degrees and exotic reputations to the traditionless school which needed them. In 1826 six out of the eight professors were foreign born, and were irreverently referred to by the students as "those damned foreign professors." The faculty in Poe's day consisted of Professors Blaettermann, Bonnycastle, Dunglison, Emmet, Key, Lomax, Long and Tucker. Seven of these men bore the best of scholastic reputations, being for the most part Englishmen from Cambridge and Oxford, with the exception of Professor Blaettermann, who was a German of profound and pedantic classical learning. George Tucker had been persuaded to leave a career in the halls of Congress to undertake the Chair of Moral Philosophy. He was the Chairman of the Faculty, which frequently met for disciplinary sessions, and afterward distinguished himself as an economist, essayist, historian, and biographer of Jefferson.[211]

The courses were of a continental character that was probably too advanced to suit the preparatory and secondary education of the American youths who were then subjected to them, but to Poe, who had received a more ample and thorough grounding in English schools, they offered an opportunity of which he took

211 *Life and Letters of Edgar Allan Poe,* J. A. Harrison, Chapter II. Also various other articles and pamphlets dealing with the establishment of the University of Virginia.

advantage. A field in which, as the records prove, he distinguished himself. This field, as might be supposed, for a young poet in love with words, was that of language.

Jefferson himself, while Governor of Virginia at an earlier date, had first introduced the formal study of modern languages into America. The organization of "his" new University offered him the opportunity for further educational innovations. Among the most notable of these was the abolition of the class system in favor of a modified form of the elective system of German Universities, the introduction of an optional period of training in military drill, the establishment of workshops for practical education, somewhat along the lines of modern industrial training, the encouragement of vaccination by gratis treatment, and the permission of optional attendance at chapel. Over all of these, the reactionary pedagogues shook their doubtful heads, and none more doubtfully than George Ticknor at Harvard. Some of these departures, though philosophically sound, were too far ahead of their time and went down to defeat.[212]

Above all, of course, or it would not have been Jeffersonian, the University of Virginia was to be democratic; the students were to govern themselves as individuals, and when discipline became necessary, it was to be by the intervention of the local arm of the civil law. This item in particular, naturally enough broke down completely, scholastic anarchy and student escapades disturbed the peace of the College, Charlottesville and the plantations about, until the faculty threatened to resign in a body and obtained the authority to exert a sufficient internal control from above, and the establishment of a more efficient method of police. In the midst of this era of airy confusion and adolescent nonsense, young Poe arrived. That, in some sense, he was its victim there can be little doubt. One of his college-mates has left us an excellent picture of the times.[212]

[212] Reminiscences of William M. Burwell from the *New Orleans Times Democrat* for May 18, 1884. Burwell's facts about Poe are not always to be taken without reservations, but his descriptions of contemporary life with Poe, when at the University, there is no reason to doubt as they are in many other ways confirmed. The text here is an excerpt from the *Alumni Bulletin,* University of Virginia, for April, 1923.

To the first sessions of this admirable school poured in the Southern youth, most of them intent upon availing themselves of the advantages afforded. Among them, however, were many who had little other object than to combine enjoyment with the preparatory routine of a liberal education. Some of this class arrived with unlimited means, others with elegant equipages. One came from the Eastern Shore with a tandem of blooded horses, a servant, a fowling-piece, and a pointer or two. Some were afflicted with habits of extravagance and contempt for the toilsome acquisition of knowledge. These not only indulged in unseemly fun in the college, but invaded the little courthouse town of Charlottesville, where they were objects of admiration, with those at least who had goods to sell or horses to hire. Mr. Jefferson having assumed that these high-spirited coadjutors in the defense of our constitutional ramparts comprehended his patriotic motives, had provided no discipline for their scholastic deportment. He confided that the restraints of propriety would be sufficient to make them behave themselves as gentlemen. They certainly did behave themselves as gentlemen of the highest style. They gamed, fought duels, attended weddings for thirty miles around, and went in debt in the most liberal manner. Mr. Jefferson often invited some of the students to dine at Monticello, where they were entertained with that urbane hospitality for which he was so remarkable. The repasts inclined no doubt to the French style of cookery, which had led Patrick Henry to close a diatribe against his doctrines with the crowning charge, " He hath abjured his native victuals! " Little is remembered of these honored entertainments except that the great statesman commended a Swiss wine of the most acid and astringent character, then regarded as a sorry substitute for the " peach and honey " of the period. . . .

The buildings first completed stood in the midst of uncultivated fields and other unattractive scenery. The county of Albemarle contained many families of the highest worth. Indeed, it had furnished many of the most eminent men in the State's history. Mr. Jefferson, Lewis, the explorer of the Missouri, and perhaps Clark, who captured Kaskaskia from the British; the Minors, Gilmers, Carters, Carrs and others were all natives of Albemarle, but these families were scattered over a large country. The courthouse town of Charlottesville had been the place near which the prisoners captured at Saratoga had been confined. It had been the temporary seat of the Legislature during the invasion or raid by Tarleton. It had a population of several hundred, but at the period now spoken of Mr. Jefferson has recorded, as one of the religious tolerations, that there being no church in the village, each of the principal church persuasions held its services in the court house under a rotation agreed on among themselves. The families of the professors

were too limited to furnish social facilities to the students. So far, then, from there being at or around the University a social intercourse of sufficient extent to have provided even reasonable recreation for so many young men, there was not even a public opinion strong enough to rebuke their excesses.

In this there was nothing strange. Station an army or a belligerent body in a small village, and a large element in that body will be demoralized by the ennui of idleness. The same body would find social and public enjoyment in a large city. Systematic drunkenness or persistent gaming are restrained, if not prevented entirely, by the variety of attractions and by the positive enforcement of law in every great metropolis.

The public opinion and corporate ordinances of the village were alike disregarded. The disorder and dissipation of the students were subjects of indignant censure. The few merchants and hotels found their account in this extravagance, though the reckless creation of debt led to the enactment of a statute subsequently by which such debts, when beyond the reasonable wants of a student were declared void. A party of students on a frolic were coming along the road between the village and the University when they suddenly encountered the professor of moral philosophy and political economy. Most of the party escaped; but, one, afterward a distinguished advocate, disdained concealment. " I am, said he, " K.M.M., of Tuskaloosa, Alabama — too firm to fly and far too proud to yield." " And," said the professor, " Mr. M. might have added, " almost too drunk to stand." . . .

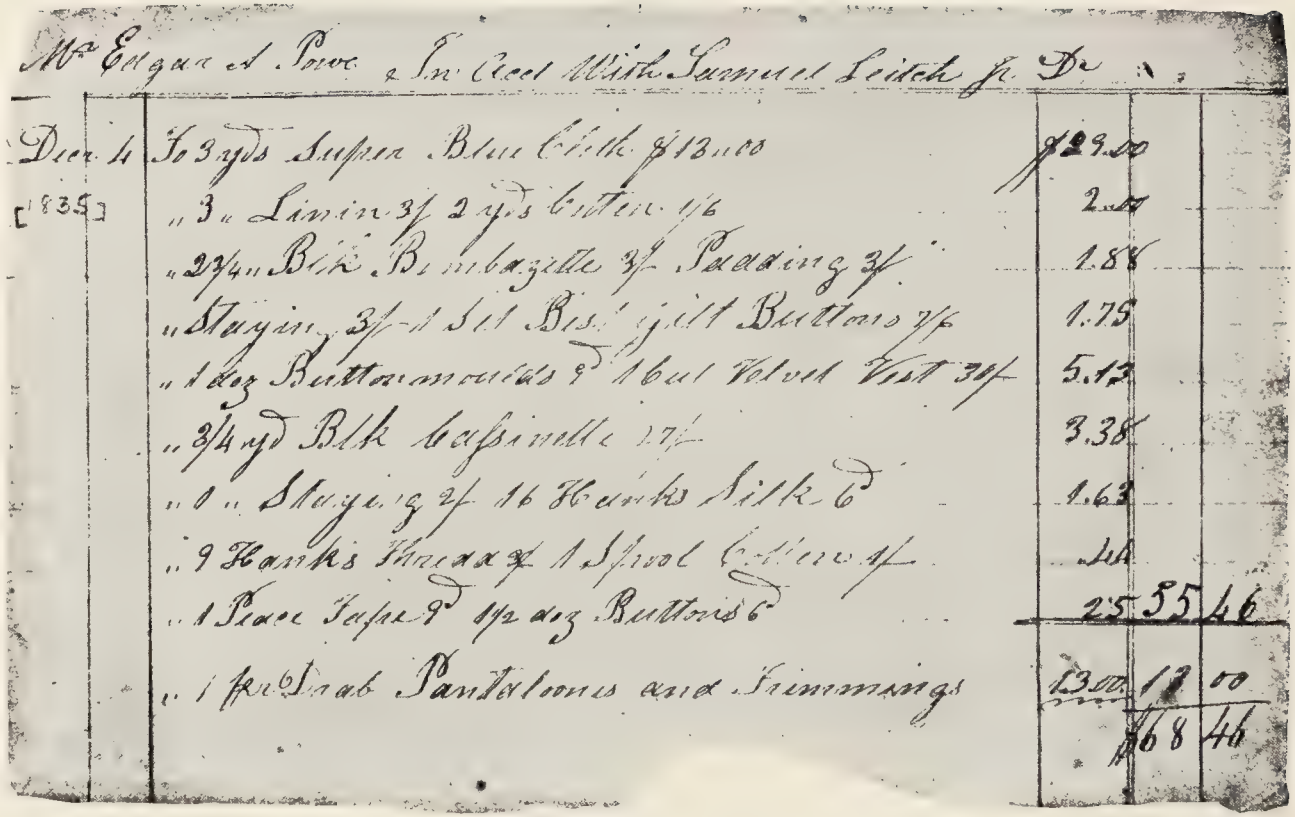
The habits of this *jeunesse dorée* had attracted the reprobation of the municipal authorities, and it was decided to extend the jurisdiction of the commonwealth over these elegant young outlaws. At a session of the grand jury, impaneled for the county of Albemarle, process was issued summoning some of the students to testify as to any violations of the gaming act known to them. No sooner was this summons known than every one who could have criminated his associates left the University and took refuge in a little wooded knoll a mile or so west, determined to remain until the great inquest of the county should have adjourned. The rendezvous then assumed the aspect of a gypsy camp. There was a clear running stream, huge rocks and a surrounding forest. The darkies, delighted with the excitement, ran between the camp and the village bringing supplies of food and drink and intelligence of the hostile movements. With a glass, indeed, the high road and buildings were distinctly visible. Of course, the laws which they had violated received additional infractions, as there was reckless pleasure in playing cards on a table of gneiss or granite and in employing pebbles for counting.



No. 13, West Range

Poe's room at the University of Virginia. Now used as a memorial to the poet

From a photograph taken in 1926



Mr Edgar A. Poe In Acct With Samuel Leitch Jr. Dr

Dec. 4	To 3 yds Superfine Blue Cloth @ 13.00		39	00
[1826]	" 3 " Linin 3/ 2 yds Cotton 1/6		2	00
	" 2¼ " Blk Bombazette 3/ Padding 3/		1	88
	" Staying 3/ 1 Set Bl[ack] gilt Buttons 7/6		1	75
	" 1 doz Buttonmoulds & 1 Cut Velvet Vest 3/6		5	12
	" ¾ yd Blk Cassimere 4/6		3	38
	" 0 " Staying 2/ 16 Hooks Silk 6		1	63
	" 9 Hanks Thread 3/ 1 Spool Cotton 1/			46
	" 1 Piece Tape & ½ doz Buttons 6		25	55 46
	" 1 pr Drab Pantaloons and Trimmings	£3 00	12	00
			68	46

Bill for a Suit of Clothes

Made for Poe to wear home for the Christmas Holidays from the University of Virginia in December, 1826, rendered to John Allan by Samuel Leitch, *Jr.*, apparently a Charlottsville tailor. Poe was anxious to make a good appearance in the eyes of *Miss* Royster, who, although he did not know it, was already engaged to another man through parental persuasion

From the Ellis & Allan files

The conjoint effect of legal penalties, scholastic discipline and parental authority, however, terminated these excesses. A few of the richer and more reckless went away, the rest settled down to their legitimate duties, and in two years the excellent faculty of the University had inaugurated the system and standard of study which gradually ripened into its present reputation for solid and universal learning.

Such, in some of its more objective lineaments, was the scholastic community in which Poe found himself. Like a great many other American Universities, then and now, the learning seems to have been available and the organization of social life nil.

Upon his first matriculating, Edgar Poe was assigned a room on the " West side of the Lawn " from which he soon afterwards removed, for what cause is not known, to room number 13 West Range, the chamber which is now known at the University of Virginia as " Poe's Room," being kept vacant and sacred to his memory. The story that Poe first roomed with one Miles George and soon afterwards fought with him, the quarrel being the occasion of Poe's move, is now known to be untrue.[213] He did, it seems, have a fist fight with young George, with the usual result of a closer friendship between them, but there are no records of his ever having a roommate, and at number 13 West Range he certainly roomed alone.

Poe's room was pleasantly situated under the second arch to the left, from the walk that divides the west dormitory arcades. It was a combined study and sleeping apartment, about fifteen by twenty feet, with a latticed and a solid door opening out upon the arcade, from which there was then a distant view of the Ragged Mountains. One window looked to the rear over a lawn, then, it seems, used as a wood yard. There was a mantelpiece and a small open fire place.[214]

Here the young poet undoubtedly passed most of his time while

[213] Letter of Dr. Miles George to Mr. Edward V. Valentine of Richmond, later sent to J. B. Ingram and now in the Ingram collection of Poe Papers at the University of Virginia, printed in the *Alumni Bulletin*, University of Virginia, for April, 1923. This letter contradicts flatly and ultimately many of Thomas Goode Tucker's " too complete memories " which have been so often followed by Poe biographers.

[214] From data gathered on a visit to the University of Virginia in July, 1925.

at the University, held his long remembered readings and parties, and wrote home the pathetic letters to his family, and those beseeching lover's complaints and declarations which little Elmira never saw, — or saw too late.[215] The room is dark; it is on a level with the ground, and has in common with other dormitories at the University of Virginia, a quaint, but rather cell-like and faintly melancholy air. In the winter it could not have been anything but cold. The heating arrangements of the time, and of many Southern homes and institutions even to-day, are constructed with an eye to the long Summer, and seem to ignore the Winter and late Fall. Of other facilities there were none. The architects of the period were engrossed with the façades of the ancients, but the *baths* of Caracalla remained, as in the middle ages, unstudied and unknown.[216]

From the mass of records and reminiscences now available it is possible to reconstruct, with some degree of accuracy, the character of the life and even the daily routine of the students while Edgar Allan Poe was in " cap and gown," a medieval idea which, by the way, America had not then adopted.

Poe was awakened every morning, probably about half-past five, by William Wertenbaker, secretary to the Faculty, Librarian and general *factotum,* whose duty it was to see that the students were up, dressed and ready for work. There were probably some sort of hurried ablutions, and then a rush for breakfast to some boarding-house nearby, followed, in Poe's case, by early morning recitations. His schedule shows that these fell between the hours of seven and nine A.M., and that his course consisted of lectures in Latin, Greek, French, Spanish and Italian.[211] One of his classmates, remembering these occasions, afterward described Poe, " as having been an excellent French and Latin scholar; he could read and speak both languages with great ease, although he could

[215] Few of Poe's biographers seem to have realized that the young student who inhabited No. 13 West Range in 1826 was under stress of great anxiety about home matters. An unhappy love affair, plus home dissensions and great financial embarrassment, all of which Poe experienced here, is enough to unsettle any college freshman. Henry Poe was away on a cruise.

[216] Even the means of obtaining fire was still in the flint and tinder age. Pocket matches, at a considerable cost, were introduced from England about a year later.

hardly be said to have known either language thoroughly. Greek he read indifferently. Time and again he would enter into the lecture room (Pavilion V, or Pavilion VI where Professors Long and Blaettermann lived) utterly unprepared to recite if called upon. But his brain was so active and his memory so excellent, that only a few moment's study was necessary, and then he was ready to make the best recitation in the class. To have an opportunity of 'reading ahead' . . . was all that Poe desired when unprepared. As a consequence of this wonderful faculty he was able to maintain a very high position in his classes, and win for himself the admiration, but more often the envy of his fellow students." [217] In this account there is an indication of a certain superficial cast to Poe's learning which agrees well with his immense affectation of it in later times. Tradition has it that the classes of young Dr. Blaettermann, who had come to the University via London, with a pleasant English bride, were particularly lively. The doctor's strong German accent, penchant for puns, and inability to keep order, brought about, it seems, some memorable and amusing scenes which Poe must have witnessed but does not seem to have taken an active part in. Indeed, both his scholastic and disciplinary records were officially excellent. The University minute books yield these items:

At a meeting of the Faculty, December 15th, 1826, —

Mr. Long made a report of the examination of the classes belonging to the School of Ancient Languages, and the names of the students who excelled at the examination of these classes:

Senior Latin Class:

Gessner Harrison of Rockingham.
Albert L. Holladay of Spottsylvania.
Berthier Jones of Amelia.
Edgar A. Poe of Richmond City., etc.

II

The names of the students who excelled in the Senior French Class as reported by the Professor of Modern Languages were as follows:

Philip St. George Ambler of Richmond City.
John Cary of Campbell.

[217] Reminiscences of Thomas G. Tucker, confirmed by similar memories of other classmates of Poe, and by the University records. Tucker wrote an article called *Edgar Allan Poe while a Student at the University of Virginia,* much quoted from.

Gessner Harrison of Rockingham.
Wm. Michie of Hanover.
Conway Nutt of Culpepper.
Edgar A. Poe of Richmond City.
Wm. Selden of Norfolk.
Henry Tutwiler of Rockingham.

Poe also did excellent work in Italian, and was at one time complimented by Professor Blaettermann for a translation from Tasso. Evidently one poet moved another.

The names on the class lists of these long dead lads, bring back vividly the air of the vanished classroom with all the pathos that an old teacher feels as he turns over the faded leaves of some dusty roll book of years before, while the names and images of those long-lost to conscious memory leap out at him with the recollection of half-forgotten incidents, recalling the ghosts of happy and laughing faces turned to dust, or long hardened into caricatures of their youthful beauty by the grim mold of manly metal. Wiping such secret, but withal not unkindly mistiness from a pair of pedagogical spectacles, the years of a century roll back before us, and we stand in Professor Blaettermann's classroom in Pavilion VI at the University of Virginia in the Spring of 1826.

The tousled heads of ten or twelve boys in their late teens, at their early morning recitation, are dotted lackadaisically about the whittled benches, trying to imbibe by inspiration from the puzzling text, what they should have learned by candle-light the night before. A mumbled conversation, despite the glare of Professor Blaettermann, is going on in one corner of the room; and on a bench near the front, seated with his cronies Tom Golson, Upton Beale or Philip Slaughter, their faces shining from the early morning pump and the run to the classroom, sits Edgar Allan Poe. "Mishter Chorge," says the young German at the desk, "are you prepart?" — silence — "Vel den, Mishter Long! Haf you prepart your Tasso? *Cherusalem Delifered,* virst stanssa, pegin" — George Long, a mild youth of some eighteen summers, given to dining with visiting ex-presidents rather than to the midnight oil, arises and fumbles out some lines. "Ach

Gott! dot vill do, Mishter Long, I see you are not *Long* for dis blace" (laughter and stamping of feet). "Mishter Poe. . . ."

Edgar gets up. He is a little flushed, his large eyes shining with eagerness; a rather slender and delicate boy of seventeen, with a mass of dark hair and an easy carriage. On the little room falls the spell of his low but arresting and unforgettable voice.[218]

The lines roll on with something in them of the sonorous Italian. The surprised class grows hushed; Professor Blaetterman beats time ecstatically with a muttered, "*Das is gud, gud!*" then — the bell — and the whole class laughing and slapping Poe on the back for having actually wrung an encomium from *one of those damned foreign professors,* pours out under the peristyle and rushes shouting, boy-like, into the bright spring sunshine of one hundred years ago.

Classes over, the day was Poe's, and the night too. There were certain periods of military drill taught at that time at the University of Virginia by Mr. Mathews, a West Point graduate.[219] This was one of Jefferson's hobbies, who felt that the future leaders in the Republic should be trained to arms, and Poe seems to have elected to take the drill probably from the flare given to his military ambition aroused as an officer in the Richmond Junior Volunteers. La Fayette's praise was evidently not forgotten, nor the exploits of Grandfather David Poe. Edgar seems to have nourished the military tradition considerably, and in a few months it was to bear bitter fruit. The military instructor afterwards recalled Poe, as, "thick-set with a jerky gait and bandy legs," but as this jars with nearly all other descriptions of the young poet at this time, we may feel certain that the instructor's recollection was at fault, or that he confused someone else with Poe.[220]

Monday mornings the colored washerwomen made their rounds, of whom no less than seven afterwards asserted that they

[218] The scene is reproduced here from contemporary accounts of such recitations and the peculiarities of Professor Blaettermann. Poe's translation of *Tasso* is specifically mentioned.

[219] J. H. Harrison, *Life and Letters of Edgar Allan Poe,* chapter II, page 39.

[220] Mr. Mathews, the drill master, seems to have followed Thomas Tucker's description which is at fault.

had all washed for " Marse Eddie Poe," and quarreled over the honor much as the Greek Cities over Homer's birth. The afternoons were spent at the library, at the stores, or about " hotels " in Charlottesville, a mile or so away, and there was swimming in the yellow Rivanna, and rambles amid the Ragged Mountains nearby. Lessons, however, were not neglected, and the Reading Room of the Library, then located in Pavilion VI, saw Poe often and deeply immersed in his books.

William Wertenbaker, the librarian, recollected Poe as, " then little more than a boy . . . about five feet two or three inches in height, somewhat bandy legged, but in no sense muscular or given to physical exercises. His face was feminine, with finely marked features, and eyes dark, liquid and expressive. He dressed well and neatly. He was a very attractive companion, genial in his nature, and familiar by the varied life that he had already led, with persons and scenes new to the unsophisticated provincials among whom he was thrown. . . . What, however, impressed his associates most were his remarkable attainments as a classical scholar. . . ." Poe was often found in the Library which was then open from three-thirty to five o'clock where he seems to have revelled in the rare and fine collection of standard authors assembled by Jefferson himself. The records show that Edgar A. Poe borrowed these books from the Library, a list which gives us some inkling of his interests outside of class work.

Historie Ancienne	— Rollin
Historie Romaine	— Rollin
America	— Robertson
Washington	— Marshall
Historie Particuliere . . .	— Voltaire
Nature Displayed	— Dufief [221]

The mixture of romantic history and natural science is characteristic. To the same reading room came Jefferson himself, his well-known figure about the University must have been familiar to Poe. They must have been together frequently in the Library,

[221] Recollections of William Wertenbaker, Librarian of the University of Virginia in *The Independent* for September, 1900.

and it is scarcely possible that at some time some conversation was not exchanged. For all that, Jefferson left no mark on the imagination of Poe. Their worlds of thought, indeed, were universes apart.

Poe's life at the University of Virginia has hitherto had to be constructed solely from the testimony and reminiscences of his classmates; it is now possible, however, for the first time to add to it the facts given in his own letter to John Allan.[222] Only two of these written from the University remain. It is probable that he wrote several others to his foster-mother but these, if they exist, and they probably do not, have not come to light. In May, 1826, Poe writes to John Allan that he has received from home a uniform coat together with six yards of striped cloth for pantaloons, and four pair of socks. He says that the coat, which is a beautiful one, fits him exactly. It seems that at this period some of the students, those at least who took military drill, wore a sort of cadet uniform which accounts for the word "uniform." The disturbances caused among the student body by the meeting of the local grand jury also comes in for brief mention. Poe says his guardian will no doubt have heard about them by that time, and tells us that those whose names had been put upon the sheriff's lists had gone on their travels into the woods and mountains taking their bedding and provisions along with them. Poe himself is evidently not among them. The *Hegira,* it seems, took place the first day of the fright. Finding that those who were "wanted" were thus disappearing into remote places, the faculty now took a hand in the affair and issued a sort of proclamation confining the student body to the dormitories between the hours of eight and ten A.M. during which time the visitation and inquisition of the sheriffs was to take place. Little attention was paid to this, however, and those with troubled consciences took to the woods freely a second time. In consequence of this the faculty the next morning reprimanded several, suspended for two months James Abbot Clarke of Manchester, one of Poe's old

222 The facts narrated in this and the ensuing paragraph are taken from two of Poe's own letters to John Allan while at the University, first published in the *Valentine Museum Poe Letters,* pages 37–44, "letters Nos. 1 and 2," now available for the first time.

schoolmates at Burke's Academy, and Armstead Carter from near Charlottesville for the rest of the session. Thomas Barclay was dismissed.

The constant fighting, duelling and bickering of the student body also comes in for mention. It was a rude age in some respects and among the students lingered many of the barbarous customs of the American frontier. Poe tells us that a common fight was such an ordinary occurrence that no notice was taken of it. A more savage and feudistic affair between Turner Dixon and one Blow from Norfolk attracted more lasting notice. In the preliminary scuffle Blow it seems had the advantage, but Dixon took revenge by posting him in most indecent terms. This, and Blow's reply, was for a week the main topic of conversation. All the pillars in the University were turned white with scribbled reminders and counter replies, until finally Dixon was provoked into making another assault on Arthur Smith, one of Blow's Norfolk friends, by striking him on the head with a stone. At this Smith pulled out a pistol and would have ended the controversy then and there if the weapon had not missed fire. Finally the Proctor of the University took a hand, summoned all the aggrieved parties before a magistrate, and bound them over to keep the peace. The picture given of the lax discipline of the student body at this period, and the hot-headed bickering of young Southern gentlemen brought up in the traditions of the duelling code is illuminating. Poe closes the letter with affectionate messages home to the ladies of the household and a request for a copy of Tacitus *Historiae* and a further supply of soap! [364]

In a second letter from the University, written to John Allan on September 21st, 1826, Poe tells us of the consternation among the student body at the announcement of the examinations to be given in the following December. As the University had only been under way for two years, he thinks it doubtful whether any diplomas or degrees will be conferred. Other institutions require three or four years before a degree is conferred, he tells us, and there was evidently some feeling that it would be unfair to examine those who had only been there one session, in the same re-

quirements, along with those who had been attending lectures for two. This, of course, covers his own case. Nevertheless, he seems fairly confident. He has been studying hard, he says, in order to prepare, and expects to come off as well as the rest, provided he is not too nervous.

Among other things, we also learn that the Rotunda was at that time nearly finished and the pillars of the Portico completed, to the great improvement of the appearance of the campus. The books, of which he says there was a fine collection, had recently been moved into the new Library. Another, and peculiarly brutal fight to the finish is also described. Poe saw the entire affair which came off just in front of his door.

One Wickliffe, who, it will appear from the sequel, must have been well-versed in the tactics of gouging and biting, then prevalent in the Western settlements, retired behind West Range to settle his differences with another student, and being the stronger, soon had the latter down and completely at his mercy. Not content with that, he then proceded to bite his antagonist from the shoulder to the elbow. Poe says that he saw the arm afterwards and that the flesh was so seriously torn as to probably necessitate the cutting out of pieces as big as his hand. Poe adds without further explanation, that Wickliffe was from Kentucky. Scarcely a generation before, the same customs had disturbed the constitutional convention when it met at Richmond, Virginia. With such wolfish tactics still lingering about, the situation of Poe when he enraged the young bloods among the gamblers of the place by failing to meet his card debts, may be imagined. Poe's September letter from the University also informs us that John Allan had already paid him a visit sometime before, and suggests that business may require his presence in Charlottesville about examination time in December. What that business eventually turned out to be, and how momentous the visit was to Poe, must be related shortly.

Of the life about the little hamlet of Charlottesville, then confined to the valley below the college, there remain many authentic traditions. With the opening of the University and the consequent influx of gilded youth, there sprang up a parasitical com-

mercial group which lived upon and exploited the students.[223] Chief among these were the hotel and boarding-house keepers who supplied the young gentlemen scholars with apple-toddy, egg-nog, mint slings, and the famous "peach and honey" of the neighborhood, or who kept dogs for the students, and connived at their clandestine affairs and gambling parties. There is some mention of Poe's paying some attention to a daughter of one of the boarding-house keepers and taking her to dances, but he does not appear to have taken any unusual part in the bucolic revels of the place, nor to have fallen at any time under the formal censure of the University authorities. The legend that he was expelled has, of course, long ago been exploded.[224] The University records, however yield us this:

The Faculty met December 20th, 1826
Present: JOHN T. SOMES, *Chairman*
DR. DUNGLISON
DR. BLAETTERMANN
MR. BONNYCASTLE
MR. TUCKER
MR. KEY

The Chairman presented to the faculty a letter from the Proctor giving information that certain Hotel Keepers during the last session had been in the habit of playing at games of chance with the students in their Dormitories — he also gave the names of the following persons who he had been informed had some knowledge of the facts, Edgar Mason, Turner Dixon, William Seawell, E. Le Branche, Edgar Poe, Drummond Emmanuel Miller, Hugh Pleasants and E. G. Crump who having been summoned to appear . . . etc.

Poe with some others said he knew nothing about it and the matter was dismissed. Evidently, in common with the other school

[223] In a letter from West Point to John Allan, dated January 3rd, 1830, Poe specifically states that he was compelled to borrow money from "Jews" in Charlottesville at exhorbitant rates of interest.

[224] William Wertenbaker's recollections made in 1869 — "I was myself a member of the last three (Poe's) classes, and can testify that he was tolerably regular in his attendance, and a successful student, having attained distinction at the Final Examination in Latin and French; and this was at that time the highest honor a student could obtain. The present regulations in regard to degrees had not been adopted. Under the existing regulations he would have graduated in the two languages above named, and have been entitled to diplomas — " *The Independent* for September, 1900.

boys, Edgar Poe did not make a very good witness. That he was a devotee if not an adept at gaming, however, the amount of his losses later bear a better witness than he himself did.

The merchants of the town evidently did a thriving trade, mostly, of course, on credit. The parents of the students were required to give surety that their bills would be settled, although there was also an act of the legislature that absolved a student from debts which were found to be " unjust." [225] The relation existing between careless and spendthrift youths, whose expenses were guaranteed, and irresponsible and avaricious shop-keepers, was one which lent itself to exploitation. In Poe's case, the situation was undoubtedly aggravated by conditions which have only lately come to light.

Young Poe was known to be the ward, and was said to be the heir of one of the richest men in Virginia.[226] It was probably not only easy and possible for him to exploit his credit to an unusual degree, but he was almost certainly pressed to do so by the shop-keepers who were familiar with his " father's " circumstances. It would seem that in the matter of clothes particularly, Poe soon ran into considerable debt. This, in itself, would have been a minor extravagance — all the clothes that even a young man of dandiacal inclinations could wear in one session would not have been a serious matter to a father in John Allan's circumstances — but Poe, it seems, used his clothes and orders upon his tailors to pay his gambling debts. He developed a great leaning for cards and no less than seventeen broadcloth coats [227] are *said* to have amply failed to satisfy his ill luck at Loo and Seven-up. This, on the surface, has an ill look for Poe, and that he was culpable to some degree cannot be denied. The real reason for Poe's " passion for gaming," which his classmates soon noticed has, however, never been told. Family letters which have recently come to light

[225] It was probably this statute that John Allan afterward took as a legal ground for refusal to pay Poe's debts. Bills of merchandise purchased by Poe from Charlottesville merchants were rendered to the firm of *Ellis & Allan* as late as 1835. These items are to be found in the *Ellis & Allan Papers,* Library of Congress, Washington, D. C. See page 154 this volume.

[226] Poe seems to have made considerable capital of this on various occasions.

[227] R. H. Stoddard *Memoir,* page 34, W. J. Middleton, publisher, 1875.

put a new face upon the matter, a face with a strange and serious expression.

John Allan, it seems, retained such a lively memory of the household controversies prior to Poe's departure for the University, that, either through previous deliberate intention, or an after-developed unwillingness to give where it hurt — probably the latter — his remittances to his foster-son were not only inadequate but almost nil. In the light of later events, it is scarcely too much to say that the firm Scotch merchant and "millionaire" had embarked upon a policy of embarrassing his foster-son.

Without the revelations contained in some of Poe's letters which have just been published (September, 1925) his embarrassed and harassed condition while at the University would never have been suspected.[228] Upon leaving for Charlottesville, John Allan provided him with $110. The expenses of attendance were, Poe assures his foster-father, at the lowest possible estimate, $350 a year, and he itemizes his immediate outlay *in advance* as follows:

For Board	$ 50.00
For lectures under 2 professors	60.00
Room rent in the University	15.00
For bed	12.00
For room furniture	12.00
Total	$149.00

Thus Poe was already $39.00 in debt immediately upon arrival at the University, and, as he says, he had the mortification of being regarded as a beggar because he owed for public property.

In reply to Poe's expostulations, John Allan did not neglect the opportunity of reproaching his foster-son for not attending *three* lectures and subjected him to the utmost abuse as if the boy were "the vilest wretch on earth" for running in debt. In compliance with the suspicious Scotchman's "command" Poe

[228] The facts in the discussion which follows are taken from the *Valentine Museum Poe Letters* published by Lippincott of Philadelphia, in 1925, and hitherto inaccessible to former biographers. See particularly letter "No. 24" dated at West Point, January 3rd, 1830, pages 253–258.

wrote him a letter giving an itemized account of his expenditures. To cover the debt of $39 the merchant sent Poe a check for $40 leaving $1 for "spending money." Text books at that time were furnished from home. Of these John Allan sent him those which were evidently in stock at *Ellis & Allan,* among them a *Cambridge Mathematics* in two volumes, and a set of *Gil Blas* which had no connection with the courses which Poe was taking.

Poe was obliged to hire a servant and pay for fuel, laundry, and all other expenses and as a consequence again "ran into debt." It was then, he says, he became "dissolute," meaning probably that he played cards for money, and adds touchingly that he calls God to witness that he never loved dissipation, but that even the hollow profession of friendship of his companions was a comfort to one whose only crime was that he had never had anyone on Earth who cared for him. His letter is, indeed, a cry of pathetic despair, and the indubitable proof of a parsimony, on the part of his guardian, which, if it was not premeditated, brands him as one of the meanest of mankind. In any event it is beneath contempt.

Poe wrote a letter to James Galt asking for relief which Galt was unable at the time to afford him. Knowing that John Allan was one of the richest men in Virginia, the other Scotchman may well have hesitated. After this he became desperate, Poe says, and involved himself irretrievably in gambling. Towards the end of the term John Allan sent him $100, but it came too late to afford him relief, and he seems to have been literally hounded from the University. Thus, in all, during the entire year at Charlottesville, Poe's guardian sent him $250, a sum which, *in toto,* was $100 less than the expenses required. The inference is plain. The result was, that Poe returned to Richmond followed by warrants and under the stigma of "extravagance." Mr. Allan's position is clear, for he not only refused to meet the debts of honor but even the bills for sweeping out his "son's room" and making his bed.[229]

Had John Allan been in straightened circumstances, there might have been some excuse for this strange parsimony, but he

[229] See the letter from Geo. W. Spotswood, Chapter X, page 189, also note 263.

was now in the full enjoyment of his uncle's ample fortune and, at that time, planning expenditures which make Edgar's expenses, debts and all, seem a bagatelle in comparison. The plain ugly fact seems to be that he disliked the boy because of what he knew, and that Edgar Allan Poe was already cut off with a shilling, and a Scotch shilling at that. Between the two men and an open rupture, was only the fast-wasting form of Frances Allan. To prevent it, even at the last, was the prayer literally on her dying lips as her breath failed.[230]

To pay his way, and even at various times to obtain food and fuel, Poe was thus reduced to the necessity of exploiting his credit in Charlottesville, and to playing cards for what he could make out of them. As always happens in such cases, he was unlucky; the debts remained unpaid, and as a consequence he began to lose caste. Even a gentleman gambler is supposed to play for the excitement and amusement, once his necessities become apparent, he enters a professional but unhonored class. Among the Virginia planters' sons and Southern youths with whom Poe played, this was particularly true. Even the labor of hands for gain was despised as being performed by slaves, to play for it was beyond the pale.

But there was cause of more heart-torturing worry than unpaid debts or the unflattering opinions of his classmates; no word had come from Elmira. All his ardent, beseeching, and heartbroken letters remained unanswered at a time when, to a young lover, silence is despair. Mr. Royster had intercepted the lovers' correspondence, and both her parents were pressing upon Elmira the suit of an older, and, in their eyes, a more acceptable man, one Mr. A. Barrett Shelton, a persistent young bachelor, and a man of means and some social distinction. Thinking that Edgar had forgotten her, the little girl reconsidered her promise to Poe and unwillingly acquiesced. That there must have been some collusion between Mr. Royster and John Allan seems an unavoidable conclusion. The two men were friends, and if Mr. Royster had thought that Poe was even to share in John Allan's estate

[230] See Chapter XII, page 231, also James Galt's testimony given by J. H. Whitty *Complete Poems of Edgar Allan Poe,* large edition, appendix page 195.

there can be little doubt that he would have regarded him with more complacence as a son-in-law. From whom he learned that this was not to be the case is not certain, but it is not hard to guess.[231]

Poe's condition at the University of Virginia was therefore a peculiarly trying one to a sensitive young lad of seventeen " with a feminine face." Outwardly he was the spoiled and petted heir of a wealthy man with a dangerous but enviable credit among the shopkeepers, a well dressed, handsome, and brilliant young scholar who played too much Loo; inwardly he was the prey to exasperating and debilitating anxieties, worried at the unexpected, unjust, and embarrassing withholding of funds, tortured by the inexplicable silence of the girl whose promise and kiss had gone with him when he left Richmond, and torn between his fear of, and duty towards his guardian, and his sympathy for his foster-mother. What he knew, he durst not tell, and it would have done him no good if he had. The letters from John Allan were wormwood and gall, and there was no one to whom in this dilemma he could turn for advice. Then too, what of the future? This also was to be considered. It is not stepping out of the surrounding frame of facts to say that it was a situation so exquisitely perplexing, that at times it was more than he could bear. In an evil hour he resorted to the temporary oblivion and releasing excitement of the bottle.

The motives which first led, and later compelled Poe to resort from time to time to drink, are not mysterious, and are certainly not inexplicable, but they are difficult to discuss and to place in their true light especially in the United States. In a country and age where the vending of alcoholic beverages has become a crime and their interdicted consumption an event of cheap bravado, the visualization of an era when a glass of wine or beer was regarded in the same light, and as inevitable, as turkey soup after Thanksgiving, requires an effort of the imagination which if the average person possesses, he is not willing to exert. Drinking has become romantic; in Poe's day the spigot was associated with, and for gustatory reasons, preferred to the pump. The gentleman of taste

[231] See Chapter VIII note 186, page 133.

saw to it that his wines were old and properly served, just as the good housewife now exerts herself to have the fish reasonably fresh and not too thoroughly fried. It is true that there were even then total abstainers, but there were also then, as there are now, vegetarians. Tipsyness, especially after dinner was regarded as enviable; drunkenness was unfortunate, — only when the habit became inveterate and disgusting did it really enter the realm of morals. To understand the cause and nature of Poe's drinking is essential to the understanding of his character; to misunderstand it is to ignorantly malign the man. Just as De Quincey is forever associated with opium, and Amy Lowell with her cigar, Poe has been credited with the bottle as the source of his inspiration. Mention him in any company, and like a reflex action comes the inevitable question, "Did he drink?" The answer is, "He did"; but to the moral indictment implied, it is no answer at all.

The first mention of Poe's drinking crops up while he was at the University of Virginia. To be sure, some capital has been made of the fact that on various occasions Poe is known to have tasted wine before. To anyone who is not hopelessly bigoted about the matter, however, these stories can be dismissed as futile attempts by special pleading to lay emphasis on facts which, by their nature, can have no significance. To say that Poe on this or that occasion in his childhood tasted wine, a beverage which, in the age of its universal use *must* have been in the houses of his foster-father and his friends, is of no more significance than to say that he drank coffee. Had Poe not over-indulged upon occasions some years later, such tittle-tattle would now no more be mentioned than the news that he ate several meals every day. Up until the time of his arrival at the University of Virginia, there is, meticulously speaking, not the slightest trace or indication, nor any evidence upon which to base even a supposition, that he had ever been intoxicated, or that he cared particularly for liquor.

That alcohol played a large and important part in determining the events of his career cannot be denied, but that it was *the* determining and most important factor is a false conclusion.[232]

[232] Many of the "Medical," "Psychological," and "Psychoanalytical," etc., etc., lives of Poe are vitiated by the fact that the premise of biographical facts

The proof of these statements will be found in the facts of the poet's life already related, and those to be set forth in the narrative which is yet to follow.

At the University, Poe for the first time began to drink. The motives which led to this seem to have been somewhat involved and various. In the first place, from his method of imbibing, Poe does not seem to have liked the taste. Your drinkers may be grouped into four several kinds; sippers, tipplers, gulpers, and guzzlers. The Sipper is your exquisite gentleman who inhales the bouquet, is particular as to the temperature, and tastes drop by drop, to the last in his delicate glass, the rare aroma of an old vintage whose date he judges not by figures but by flavor. Tipplers are those who drain the glass in private, slowly but often, judging the brew by the quality and duration of the dreamful aftermath. Gulpers are those who care nothing for the taste, but with a single direct motion send the drink home for the result. Your Guzzler is he who drinks all, as rapidly, as frequently, and as persistently as he can. In this convivial category our hero was of the third degree, a Gulper. "He would always seize the tempting glass, generally unmixed with sugar or water, — in fact perfectly straight and without the least apparent pleasure, swallow the contents, never pausing until the last drop had passed his lips. One glass at a time was all that he could take; but this was sufficient to rouse his whole nervous nature into a state of strongest excitement which found vent in a continuous flow of wild, fascinating talk that enchanted every listener with siren-like power." [233]

Edgar's revels were held in his own room. A good fire would be lit, the furniture or other odds and ends sometimes serving for

from which their conclusions are drawn is at fault, due to the statements of old biographies that rest on legendary sources. To put the case mildly, for instance, very little is really known of Poe's heredity. The real character of his parents and immediate grandparents cannot be ascertained with sufficient clearness to warrant any *scientific* conclusions. See the appendix for a discussion of Poe's heredity.

[233] Reminiscences of Thomas G. Tucker, Poe's classmate. Peter the Great of Russia had caused a great furor in England in the Seventeenth Century by a similar method of drinking. Bishop Burnett says it was Peter's custom to drink large bumpers of brandy, raw, before breakfast, and to gulp them down. The Muscovite seems to have derived much pleasure from the performance, and in contradistinction to Poe, "liked the taste."

fuel (if the wood yard outside the window was not privateered upon) the table was drawn out and the game began. Several of those who were present at such times, have testified to the fact that Poe seemed under great nervous strain and excitement. When the means for his daily needs depended upon the run of cards, we can understand this. Ill luck would make it worse. Of the strain he was under from other causes, his classmates could, of course, have known nothing. Poe's drinking, which at worst seems to have been very occasional at the University, probably took place for a variety of reasons.

In the first place as we have seen, it was the custom of the time and the fashion at the University. There must also have been a certain amount of bravado in the young student, in common with many others at a similar stage of development, who want to " Play the man " and impress the world with their manly sophistication. Poe seems to have rather affected the rôle of the finished youth. His experience abroad, his coming from Richmond the " big town " of his group, and the reputed wealth of his " father," all led him to live up to the jejune ideal which he assumed the others to demand of him. It was the boy's aim to impress and to be remarkable. There was also another motive, perhaps not a conscious one, but a powerful one. Poe was not to the manner born. In the group of " F.F.V.'s " in which he found himself, he desired to be accepted without question, and the social doubt that his birth implied drove him not only to equal, but to try to exceed his companions in their own modes; to be a remarkable, a strange and a good fellow. As always the thing was overdone. Those who are sure of themselves never need to impress. So the fire burned more brightly, the stakes were perhaps a little higher, and the drinking a little deeper than was necessary. Lastly, but most important of all, in the temporary excitement of wine came self-confidence and oblivion. It made him confident, and it made him forget. This, at all times, then and in the future, was the main reason for his drinking.

The effect upon Poe of even a small quantity was out of all usual proportion. He seems to have been so sensitively organized, that a dram, which to the average man caused only a faint glow,

was sufficient to make his actions and conversation unusual. One glass was literally too much; two or three were disastrous; and a continued round of potations reduced him to a quivering caricature of himself, a libel on genius, and a portent of fallen humanity. The aftermath was physical torture, spiritual despair, and the remorse of a "lost" but abnormally sensitive soul. These manifestations are discussed here in the light of what was to follow rather than in connection with Poe's imbibing at the University, which is important as a beginning and a tendency rather than for its immediate importance.

While at Charlottesville, Poe's drinking seems to have been noted for its unusual effects upon an already remarkable personality rather than for its frequency. It was not habitual but rare. A visit to his room while one of his parties is underway, in the company of one of his classmates, will perhaps serve to make this clear. A classmate says: [234]

> Poe roomed on the West side of the Lawn, I on the East, he afterwards moved to the Western Range (Number 13) — I was often in both rooms and recall the many hours spent therein. . . . He was very excitable and restless, at times wayward, melancholic and morose, but again in his better moods frolicsome, full of fun and a most attractive and agreeable companion. *To calm and quiet the excessive nervous excitability under which he labored,* he would too often put himself under the influence of the "Invisible Spirit of Wine."

Another companion remarks: [235]

> The particular dissipation of the University at this period was gaming with cards, and into this Poe plunged with a recklessness of nature which acknowledged no restraint. . . . It led to a loss of caste among his high spirited and exclusive associates.

Tom Tucker also tells us: [236]

> Poe's passion for strong drink was as marked and as peculiar as that for cards. It was not the taste of the beverage that influenced him;

[234] Dr. Miles George in a letter to Edward V. Valentine of Richmond, May 18, 1880. This letter is now in the Ingram collection at the University of Virginia.

[235] William M. Burwell, May 18, 1884, in the *New Orleans Times Democrat.*

[236] Thomas Goode Tucker to Douglas Sherley — letter — April 5, 1880. Also quoted by Prof. Woodberry vol. 1, 1909, page 33.

without a sip or smack of the mouth he would seize a full glass, without water or sugar, and send it home at a single gulp. This frequently used him up; but if not, he rarely returned to the charge.

Such drinking bears all the marks of being a very juvenile performance, indeed, Baudelaire has called it potations *en barbare,* but it has about it, laying aside the pitiably boyish bravado, a certain gesture of childlike despair that is significant. No letter from Elmira and several from John Allan — down goes a nasty dram which " frequently used him up " — and no wonder, the " peach-honey " of the University was a man's drink.

West Range was known in Poe's day as " Rowdy Row " and there were strict rules that the students' doors must be unbarred when a professor tapped on them, a rule hard to enforce. But not all of the parties in Number 13 were given over to cards and convivialities; these, it seems, in the light of after events have been overstressed. The real boy who dwelt there was of another stamp, or there would not now be over the door of Number 13 " Rowdy Row " a bronze tablet with —

EDGAR ALLAN POE
MDCCCXXVI
Domus parva magni poetæ [237]

Many a long hour in the little dormitory was spent poring over favorite poets, Shelley, Keats, Coleridge and Wordsworth, present now beyond all doubt, and the old favorites Byron and Moore. Here, too, first began to take shape *Tamerlane,* through which moved the ghost of Elmira as he imagined her, and longed for her walking with him through the wild glens of the Ragged Mountains, that, with *Kubla Khan's* magic on his lip, he called the " Mountains of Belur Taglay." Why were his letters never answered? Did he suspect the truth before the term was over —

[237] The inscription seems to be after that on the house of Erasmus in the Hoogestraate, Rotterdam.

I pictured to my fancy's eye
Her silent, deep astonishment,
When a few fleeting years gone by
(For short the time my high hope lent
To its most desperate intent,)
She might recall in him, whom Fame
Had gilded with a conqueror's name
(With glory — such as might inspire
Perforce, a passing thought of one,
Whom she had deem'd in his own fire
Wither'd and blasted; who had gone
A traitor, violate of the truth
So plighted in his early youth,)
Her own Alexis, who should plight
The love he plighted *then* — again,
And raise his infancy's delight,
The bride and queen of Tamerlane. — [238]

Ah, yes! He would show her that he was faithful, he, whom she had thought forgetful. To her he would return and make her his bride and queen when fame was his! How delightful, how youthful, and how pathetic! In the meanwhile he crammed his mind from "many an ancient volume of forgotten lore," and treasured all those honeyed fancies that cloy the too sweet lines of *Al Aaraaf*.

The Sephalica, budding with young bees,
Upreared its purple stem around her knees, —

he writes, culling the rich vowels of the flower's name from the pages of *Nature Displayed* flung at random on the table — "bees — bees" — there occurs the ready rhyme of "knees" and the vision of a certain intriguing petticoat flaunted from a sofa in a parlor on Second Street in Richmond, then Elmira standing up to her knees among flowers in the Enchanted Garden just as they were said to have sprung about the feet of Sapho, and the lines say themselves. But that will never do. No, he is the scholar now, too, and the young poet solemnly notes of the *sephalica*, "This flower is much noticed by Lewenhoeck and Tournefort, the bee feeding upon its blossom becomes intoxicated." [239] One

[238] From the 1827 version of *Tamerlane*, stanza XII.
[239] See Poe's own notes to *Al Aaraaf*.

wonders how anybody with a name like *Lewenhoeck* could have noticed anything so charming. Nor did he keep these fancies entirely to himself. " Poe was fond of quoting poetic authors and reading poetic productions of his own, with which his friends were delighted and entertained; suddenly a change would come over him; then he would with a piece of charcoal evince his versatile genius by sketching upon the walls of his dormitory, whimsical, fanciful and grotesque figures, with so much artistic skill, as to leave us in doubt whether Poe in future life would be a painter or a poet." [240] Among these sketches were grotesques of the plates of an edition of Byron. What an enthusiasm and a necessity for self-expression was pent up in these close walls!

The company that gathered about the fire in Number 13 to listen to some of the early American Short Stories and the impassioned voice of Israfel reciting his own poetry, was a brilliant one and comprised some of the future leaders of the time.[241] Those who listened to Poe then never forgot him. Between the glasses of hot apple-toddy, the bursts of laughter and the green oaths of youth, the anecdotes about the campus queans, the idiosyncrasies of the faculty, and the latest student duel, Poe would read something he had just written, putting his whole soul into his gestures and the low melodious modulations of his voice, while the fire flickered and the long candle shadows waved to and fro. Then followed an open expression of opinions.[242] " On one occasion Poe read a story of great length to some of his friends who, in a spirit of jest, spoke lightly of its merits, and jokingly told him that his hero's name ' Gaffy ' occurred too often. His proud spirit would not stand such open rebuke, so in a fit of anger, before his friends could prevent him, he had flung every sheet into a blazing fire, and thus was lost a story of more than ordinary parts which, unlike most of his stories, was intensely amusing, entirely free from his usual somber coloring and sad conclusions merged in a mist of impenetrable gloom. He was for

[240] Dr. Miles George to Edward V. Valentine, letter, May 5, 1880, now in the Ingram collection, University of Virginia.

[241] For a long list of the distinguished men who were at the University of Virginia with Poe, see Harrison, *Life and Letters of Edgar Allan Poe*, vol. I.

[242] Thomas Goode Tucker is quoted here.

a long time afterwards called by those in his particular circle 'Gaffy' Poe, a name that he never altogether relished." And so, as might have been expected, the proud "Alexis" who was to come back as the conquering hero, "gilded by fame," to make Elmira his queen and his bride, had become "Gaffy"! The name followed him to West Point. But there is nearly always affection in a nickname, even ridicule is familiar, and Poe was evidently liked. "Whatever Poe may have been in after years," says a classmate and intimate friend, "he was at the University as true and perfect a friend as the waywardness of his nature would allow. There was never then the least trace of insincerity."

With all of its distractions, this was seed-time for a great harvest. Under Professor Long, who had a passion for geography in its relation to history, may have first arisen Poe's minute knowledge of the bizarre facts in the customs and landscapes of "far countrees," and the curiosity to continue the research out of which tales could be fabricated with that "imaginative-realism" in which he delighted. Professor George Tucker, who touched even the dry data of statistics and treatises on population with the virile wand of interest, could scarcely have failed to attract Poe, for while Poe was at the University, Tucker was writing a story called *A Voyage to the Moon,*[243] after the very manner followed later by his pupil in his *Balloon Hoax, Hans Pfaall,* and the like. Poe not infrequently visited the faculty at home and such things as lunar voyages may have been discussed. It was a topic upon which Edgar would love to enlarge. Keats longed for the moon like a child; Poe with his combined mathematics and poetry imagined that he reached it.

And there were the Ragged Mountains! — Poe knew a private and little-trod path that led there, to glens glistering in the Spring with the bleached flame of the dogwood blossoms, or brilliant beyond European imagination after the first frosts with the pied motley of the scarlet and golden Virginia Fall. Here he could find solitude and dream of Elmira, and make poems "upon a dim, warm, misty day, toward the close of November, and during the strange *interregnum,* of the seasons which in America is termed

[243] Published in the *American Quarterly Review* in 1827.

the Indian summer." [244] Of what he saw and thought there, let him speak for himself when " . . . attended only by a dog upon a long ramble among the chain of wild and dreary hills that lie westward and southward of Charlottesville."

> The thick and peculiar mist, or smoke, which distinguishes the Indian summer, and which hung heavily over all objects, served no doubt, to deepen the vague impressions which these objects created. So dense was this pleasant fog that I could at no time see more than a dozen yards of the path before me. This path was excessively sinuous, and as the sun could not be seen, I soon lost all idea of the direction in which I journeyed. . . . In the quivering of a leaf — in the line of a blade of grass — in the shape of a trefoil — in the humming of a bee — in the gleaming of a dew drop — in the breathing of wind — in the faint odors that came from the forest there came a whole universe of suggestion — a gay and motley train of rhapsodical and immethodical thought.

This was a very excellent classroom, indeed, for a poet, and there is no better incubator in the world for dreams than the sun diffused in warm mist.

Thus slipped the months away. On July 4th Jefferson had died and Poe heard the old University bell tolled for the first time to mark his passing. Edgar was himself secretary of the " Jefferson Literary Society," [245] a type of organization that in the college life of the time provided not only literary and oratorical occasions, but became a convenient means for the formal recognition of cliques; it filled very largely the place of the modern fraternity. In a Southern college, the death of its great founder would not fail to be marked by the student orators of the time. It was still the age of the spoken word.[246] But the Fall of 1826 was marked

[244] The quotations here are from Poe's *Tale of the Ragged Mountains,* published in *Godey's Lady's Book* for 1844.

[245] Some doubt has been thrown on the authenticity of Poe's signature as the secretary of this society.

[246] When the *History of Oratory in the United States* is written, as it ought to be, the large part played in national political movements by the literary societies in American schools and colleges will become apparent. Starting as genuine debating groups, in which argumentation was actually studied and practised, these forensic-social groups gradually deteriorated; parliamentary procedure devolved into a patter and ritual; the laws of evidence were disregarded, and the palm awarded to the loquaciously-eloquent, whose flights were unhindered by the weight

for Edgar Poe by an event which must have caused him more immediate and genuine sorrow than the death of Jefferson. Some time in the late Autumn of the year John Allan seems to have visited Charlottesville. It was no mere matter of academic interest that drew his reluctant feet to the University; certain manuscripts bearing his foster-son's signature had come to light, not poems, but bills payable.

As the term drew to its close near the Christmas holidays, the merchants of Charlottesville who supplied the University students, doubtless began to want to see the color of money before their gay young customers departed from the neighborhood. Bills were sent home and the usual difficulties began. Owing to his guardians untimely parsimony in sending Edgar almost no cash allowance at all, the boy had no doubt had to use his credit to an unusual extent to begin with.

One can imagine the almost apoplectic effect of the cold record of his ward's progress along the primrose path, when presented in dollars and cents to the purse-careful Scotchman. John Allan seems to have called James Hill, ordered out the carriage, and driven post-haste over to Charlottesville. Nor would two days journey over the mountain roads of Virginia, in the McAdamless year of grace 1826, have served to smooth his wrath. He had plenty of time to think over what he would do and say, and as usual his action was vigorous and his remarks characteristic.

The interview between Edgar and his guardian at Number 13 must have been a fiery one. Poe's proceedings had been, indeed, most unfortunate. The result was fraught with tremendous consequences to his future. Mr. Allan no doubt found a rather recalcitrant and exasperated youth to deal with; the whole story came out inevitably, as the bills were there to expose it; and Poe was curtly informed that his University career was over.

Whatever drinking there had been, must have been made the most of, and the gambling debts were, of course, inexcusable in

of logic. One of these "orators" from Buncombe County, North Carolina, who was elected to the United States Congress, has added a new word to the language, *buncombe,* later shortened, to *bunk*. The necessity for the word is by no means sectional.

the eyes of the older man. These, Mr. Allan refused to pay. He may have settled some of those for which he was legally responsible and afterward have driven away in high dudgeon, nor would it be any balm to his feelings, under the circumstances, that to a certain extent his attempt to put his ward on short commons had resulted in his having to pay more in the end. Edgar's brilliant scholastic record gave him nothing to complain of, so the affair was entirely financial. When all is said and done, a few apple-toddies could not have weighed very heavily in the scale except to lend extra force to the older man's invective. Poe's predicament will scarcely be evident to modern eyes. In his day, imprisonment for debt was still in full force; the laws of Virginia were stringent, and the boy, as soon as the news of his guardian's attitude got about, which must have been instanter, *would find himself pursued by warrants.*[247] Until the debts were satisfied, he could not return to the county where they had been contracted, and in a short while processes were issued which drove him from the state. By simply withholding his aid, John Allan automatically made Poe's return impossible. Whatever indiscretions Poe may have committed, there is no evidence that he deserved a punishment which involved the whole of his future. Mr. Allan was not legally responsible for the gambling debts, but a few hundred dollars would have staved off the merchants at Charlottesville. The cold fact remains that the good merchant did not think that his foster-son was worth this. The threat to his Scotch purse was unforgivable. A few years later he made ample provision for his natural children in his will, legacies which, although a long and scandalous litigation was involved, his second wife undertook to set aside. In possession of a great fortune, $250 was the extreme limit of his effort to carry out his promise to give Poe a liberal education. In short the " jig was up." Poe had lost his opportunity of a University education, and had to face alone the demands for the payment of his debts of honor, doubtless to him the most unpleasant aspect of the affair. As a result of the situation he

[247] In Poe's last letter to John Allan from West Point he specifically states that he was hounded out of Richmond by warrants. See *Valentine Museum Poe Letters,* letter No. 24, page 256.

seems, as one of his classmates says "to have lost caste." The last of the Charlottesville episode closed in gloom. From William Wertenbaker, who was a close friend of Edgar, we have a vivid description of the final hours at the University.

On the night of December 20th, 1826, or thereabouts, the two young men spent the early hours of the evening at the house of one of the faculty, probably Professor Tucker, or Professor Blaettermann, whose conversation and young English wife must have attracted the boys to the fireside. After the visit, Wertenbaker and Poe walked over to "the small dwelling of a great poet" in West Range, where Poe began to smash up the furniture. This he burned with sundry papers, and the accumulated rubbish of the term in the little fireplace, meanwhile telling his troubles, in a gloomy and foreboding vein, to William Wertenbaker, a sympathetic listener.

> It was a cold night in December, and his fire having gone pretty nearly out, by the aid of some tallow candles, and the fragments of a small table which he broke up for the purpose, he soon rekindled it, and by its comfortable blaze I spent a very pleasant hour with him. On this occasion he spoke with regret of the large amount of money he had wasted and of the debts he had contracted during the session. If my memory is not at fault he estimated his indebtedness at $2000, and, though they were gaming debts, he was earnest, and emphatic in the declaration that he was bound by honor to pay, at the earliest opportunity, every cent of them.[248]

William Wertenbaker probably went home about midnight, leaving Edgar to fall asleep by the flickering shadows of the dying fire as the last sticks of his little table, upon which *Tamerlane and Other Poems* had come into being, slowly turned into ashes, the ashes of lost opportunity.

The next day he climbed on the Charlottesville coach in company with Philip St. George Ambler, Robert Hunter, Zaccheus Lee, Creed Thomas, and other youths of Richmond, Washington, and the vicinity, and started for home. They must have stopped overnight on the way, and arrived in Richmond the day before

[248] This is one of the most authentic glimpses of Poe at the University that we have. William Wertenbaker afterward became Librarian of the University of Virginia. It was his "profession" to cherish the literary memories of the place.

Christmas, 1826. Poe brought with him a small trunk, in which were the remnants of a considerable wardrobe, the spoil of the Charlottesville merchants, a few cherished books, and the manuscripts of some of the poems which appeared in Boston about six months later.[249] The prodigal had returned. As he ran up the steps of the big house on Main Street, dressed in a "London hat, a super-blue broadcloth suit with gilt buttons, a velvet vest and drab pantaloons,"[250] he probably had no hallucinations as to the fatted calf, or that John Allan, under the circumstances, would rehearse the paternal rôle in the parable. But he seems to have been met with fondly welcoming arms by Frances Allan and his dear "Aunt Nancy." Holly was in all the windows, and mistletoe festooned the chandeliers, but where was Elmira?

[249] *Tamerlane and Other Poems.* It is also even possible that the notes and many of the lines of *Al Aaraaf* were in existence at this date as it bears the stamp of having been conceived where a library was available and leisure to use it. *Al Aaraaf* was published in 1829. Poe afterward used it as a mine for later poems, *Zante,* etc.

[250] Poe purchased these articles on December 4, 1826, from Samuel Leitch, Jr., a Charlottesville merchant. Mr. Allan refused to pay the bill, now in the *Ellis & Allan Papers,* Library of Congress, Washington, D. C., Poe's name on the bill is misspelled *Powe.*

CHAPTER X
Alias Henri Le Rennét

SO the prodigal found himself, suddenly, in Richmond again. Ill at ease, too, for he had now given John Allan real cause for complaint, and his position in the household was essentially uncomfortable; lawyers were trying to force Mr. Allan to recognize his foster-son's gambling debts which, it appears, in all totalled about $2500,[251] when the final sums came in. These John Allan resolutely refused to recognize, and his exasperation seems to have been so extreme then, or later, that he would not even settle for accounts that were legitimately contracted.[252] The greeting between the two could only have been curt.

Poe must have felt his position keenly. The other boys, to some of whom he doubtless owed money, were also home for the holidays. For them it was Christmas and a merry time. Poe, in his chagrin, would scarcely care to see them. There would be no happy return on a noisy coach to Charlottesville after New Year's. He was no longer the brilliant young student and sport of his set, with a literary career ahead, but the prodigal whose brief career of glory was over, whose social position with his own friends was compromised by unpaid debts of honor, with the dubious prospects of *perhaps* a place on a stool in the counting house of *Ellis & Allan.* The pill was a bitter one, and it was made no easier by his discovery of the truth about Elmira. Luckily, it is not hard to piece out the events of the first day at home, the day before Christmas.

Edgar must have had a long talk with his "mother" and

251 Statement made by Col. Thomas H. Ellis in a letter to the editor of the *Richmond Standard,* April 22, 1881. Lawyers' letters relating to collection of these debts are still extant in Richmond, Virginia.

252 See specifically the letter of Edward G. Crump to Poe, March 25, 1827 on page 200.

"Aunt Nancy"; that at least we can be sure was comforting. On his drive to the University, the February before, it seems that he had even then broached the subject to Frances Allan of leaving John Allan's house, and making his own way in the world. She, however, had persuaded him to go on to Charlottesville.[253] The return of Poe in "disgrace" must have again aroused apprehensions that he would leave her, and she was anxious to soften the hard places of his fall, and make him welcome again by the fireside which she had done so much to make happy. Nothing is more indicative of her affection than the fact that she had arranged for him, that very night, a Christmas Eve party to which his friends were to be invited, as a formal advertisement of the fact that he was still at home as the beloved foster-son of a hospitable house. Nor was this in reality putting much of a strain on the circumstances surrounding Poe's withdrawal. That John Allan permitted it, shows that even he acquiesced.[254]

It must be remembered that Edgar had not in any official way disgraced himself.[255] That he had gambled, and upon occasions overstepped the mark in the drinking bouts, was true, but it was also true of nearly all the other students. He had not incurred the displeasure of the authorities, and been dismissed; his guardian had withdrawn him, not so much because of the "immorality" of his conduct, as on account of his debts.[256] In the final analysis this was what worried Mr. Allan most, as it would worry any Scotchman or commercial-minded man. Had Edgar's waywardness been of an inexpensive type it might have been censured, but no very drastic action would have followed. The tune of $2500.

[253] Statement made by James Hill, the Allan's coachman, who drove Mrs. Allan and Poe to Charlottesville in 1826. See Whitty *Memoir*, large edition, page xxvii. Also close of Chapter IX, this volume.

[254] Thomas Bolling, a young friend of the Allan family and an acquaintance of Poe, visited the Allan house in Richmond the day before Christmas and was invited to this party. The Bolling family was settled in Goochland County at "Bolling Hall," and "Bolling Island" Plantations. John Allan's plantation was in the same neighborhood. See page 859.

[255] See John Allan's letter to the Secretary of War from Richmond, May 6, 1829. "I have much pleasure in asserting that he (Poe) stood his examination at the close of the year with great credit to himself."

[256] John Allan says in the same letter referred to in note 255, "He left me in consequence of some gambling at the University at Charlottesville," etc.

for one term was a melody which did not appeal to a Scotch ear, however, and as Mr. Allan had to pay the piper, he had decided to put a period to the dance. It was, in the opinion of him who had to bear the expense, not worth the cost. At best, Mr. Allan's enthusiasm over a liberal education for the foster-child must have been limited. That limit had already been exceeded during the first year of the cultural interlude, and, as a consequence, Master Edgar found himself suddenly very much at home. It was this financial aspect, too, in a more personal and proud way, rather than the pricking of bad conscience, which appears to have worried young Poe the most. The drinking escapades, on which so much emphasis has been laid, could not have caused him much self reproach at the time. He could not see them as the evil portents of the future. He must have been a little ashamed of the fact that his head was not as hard as the heads of his mates who could carry their liquor better than he, but, that he had taken a not unusual part in what was then expected and practised by every live young gentleman at college, did not cause him much spiritual dismay we may be sure. Drinking in all its aspects stood on a different moral plane in 1826 than in 1926. What did worry and cause him chagrin, perhaps even a feeling of disgrace, was the remembrance that a goodly number of ex-college mates possessed certain I. O. U.'s for not inconsiderable amounts, notes which his foster-father had refused to honor. These in the boy's eyes were debts of honor; in Mr. Allan's they were debts of dishonor, and in legal fact to him did not exist. The fact that his disappointing and troublesome foster-son might lose prestige among the members of a fast young set, whose good opinion Mr. Allan did not think worth having, especially at a great price, left him unmoved.

Edgar, on the other hand, like most boys of his age, probably felt, and valued more keenly, the attitude of his fellows than the opinions of his parents.[257] This, coupled with an inability to appreciate the nature and difficulty of acquiring what was so easy

[257] One of the main motives for Poe's leaving Richmond and assuming an alias was undoubtedly his desire to avoid the unbearable contacts with those to whom he owed debts of honor.

to spend, undoubtedly contributed the main stress in an already strained condition of affairs.

With the women of the household this monetary consideration could not have been the most important one. Like most women, they regarded the situation in its purely human and personal aspect as a conflict of personalities. They were more apt to condone what in their eyes was, at worst, the result of the natural exuberance and inexperience of a handsome boy under whose more manly clothes beat the romantic heart and pulsed the warm body which they had loved and cherished since childhood. It is scarcely possible that Mrs. Allan ever forgot the purple cap with the gold tassel, the Nankeen trousers and the buckled shoes. No good woman ever would.

So there was to be a party! We can imagine Edgar's reception of the news, his appreciation of all that it meant, and his passionate gratitude to his " mother." What would he do without her? She who was frail and ill, his " dear, dear Ma! " — Now he would run over and see Elmira. . . .

The blow was a staggering one. " No, she was not at home. Miss Royster has left Richmond." The door closed, shutting out the little parlor where the flute had once warbled and the piano tinkled, leaving him, can we doubt it, in tears. Someone must have told him, and someone must have left him in despair.[258]

It was all plain now. He could hear John Allan and Mr. Royster talking it over, see all of his pathetic letters opened by an unfeeling hand, the amused grins over the ardent lines, and a little girl in tears. Then the advent of the unwelcome Mr. Shelton, his plausible talk, and Elmira at last sent away where her lover could not find her to tell her he still loved her, that it was all a cruel lie, and that her Prince Charming had come back to claim his princess after all. How dreary the Enchanted Garden now, and how cold the snow looked on the roofs as he looked across

[258] There is, of course, no " document " describing this visit to the Royster's. Poe may have learned of Elmira's plight even before he left the University, or from the servants or his foster-mother. In any event, the result of the news would have been the same. If the story was held from him, as seems likely, his first instinct would have been to visit Elmira. At the Royster house further concealment would have been impossible.

to the Roysters' and saw the empty window where a handkerchief had once waved! It was all like a bad dream. As he unpacked the mementoes of his lost room at the University, who can doubt that the lines of certain manuscripts indited to a lost little lady swam dizzily before him through the mist of his despair. Could she, had she actually forgotten him? Most of Poe's historians have dismissed the " Elmira incident " as an amusing story of puppy-love. They forget that in 1826–27, especially in the South, marriage took place *commonly* in the 'teens. Poe had not simply lost a nice little sweetheart but his promised *wife*. Elmira *married* Mr. Shelton the next year. She had two children by him, both named Sarah Elmira, who died in infancy, and a son. This " affair " was in reality a great emotional crisis, and a frustration in the life of Edgar Allan Poe. The home-making instinct here received its deathblow, with a consequent tendency towards *wanderlust*. It was one of the deepest sources of Poe's melancholy.

In considering Poe's parting and break with his guardian, during the months of December, 1826, and January, 1827, the fact of his broken engagement and the resulting irritation and wound to his pride and hopes must be included. The spectacle of a pretty young girl, from whose lips both the promises and pledges of affection have been freely received but a few months before, in the arms of an ardent young rival, is not one well calculated to sooth the smart of misfortune. For with even the affectation of Byronic pride and passion, and Poe had more than that, it was a choking piece of humble pie. Hence the little *Song* from poems written in youth and dated 1829.

I saw thee on thy bridal day — [259]
When a burning blush came o'er thee,
Though happiness around thee lay,
And the world all love before thee;

And in thine eye a kindling light
(Whatever it might be)
Was all on Earth my aching sight
Of loveliness could see.

[259] Written after the marriage of Elmira to Mr. Shelton and undoubtedly addressed to her.

Nor were a few rather poor lines the end of Elmira. After the exit of Mr. Shelton she was to come on the stage again with Israfel to take part in the last brief, hopeful, sunset glow of his final act. But in December, 1826, the end seemed inevitable — a merry Christmas, indeed! The scene now shifts to a little later on in the afternoon.

We are indebted to the testimony of Thomas Bolling,[254] a former schoolmate of Edgar's, to whom Mr. Allan had extended a cordial invitation to call, sometime before when he was on a visit to the country, for a description of the events at the Allan house on Christmas Eve, 1826. The young man, who was about Edgar's age, had taken the opportunity of paying his respects to Mr. and Mrs. Allan during the afternoon of the 24th, and was somewhat embarrassed to see that preparations for an entertainment were under way. He at once rose to leave, but was stopped by Mr. Allan, who cordially insisted upon his staying, explaining that Edgar had just returned from the University, and that some of his young friends and acquaintances had been asked in to meet him. Young Bolling replied that he was not suitably dressed, whereupon Mr. Allan bade him, "Go up to Edgar's room. He will supply you with one of his own suits." The remarkable extent of Poe's wardrobe was now probably thoroughly impressed on Mr. Allan's mind.

Upon going upstairs, Tom Bolling found Edgar lying on a lounge in his own room reading. "A handsomely furnished room, with books and pictures arranged in bookcases around the wall." One cannot help wondering if the little picture of Boston with the pathetic lines on the back was among the rest. Edgar welcomed his friend cordially, and threw open the doors of his well-stocked wardrobe, giving Tom his choice. Both of them then went down stairs to the drawing room where Edgar did his part, in welcoming his guests. As the evening wore on, Poe seems to have become as impatient as usual with the formal social scene, and pulling young Bolling aside, he quietly proposed that they slip off down street and have a private spree of their own. Bolling replied at first "That it would never do," but his friend was so urgent that he finally yielded, and the company was left to

enjoy themselves as well as they could without the presence of the " honor guest."

Just what led Poe to do this, it is not hard to guess. The reception of friends who knew the story of his fiasco at the University was probably no easy matter, Elmira must have been keenly on his mind, and the festivities of a Southern Christmas Eve thoroughly out of keeping with his mood. In company with Bolling, we can imagine him retiring to Mrs. E. C. Richardson's tavern, a favorite haunt, where he may have found Ebenezer Burling, and over a few comforting cups confided the perplexities of his situation, while the festivities went on at home minus the presence of the young host.

Poe's accounts to his friends of his University career were, as might have been expected, not the whole truth. In self defense he seems to have assumed a rather lofty indifference, and to have tried with a college boy's braggadocio to impress his acquaintances with the " sporty " side of his life. His debts he explained by saying that he wanted to see how much of the old man's money he could spend,[260] and the seventeen broadcloth coats were an item in his remarks. This, if it came to Mr. Allan's ears, could not have helped to heal matters. Of the real reasons, neither he nor Poe would have been anxious to talk. The deserted party must also have been oil on the flames rather than a domestic lubricant. One is warranted in picturing Mr. Allan as very angry, and " Ma " perhaps in tears, when the boys returned that night, if either of the couple were inclined to sit up that long. The holly at the Christmas breakfast table could scarcely have expressed the spirit of the occasion for Frances Allan any more than the mistletoe did for Edgar.[261] It was all very tragic, and it was all very human. There was right and wrong on both sides, a determined, exasperated, and incensed older man, and a despairing, sensitive and love-sick boy. Out of such stuff the world's tragedies are conveniently made.

The Christmas Holidays of 1826 marked the last passing phase

260 R. H. Stoddard *Memoir*. See note 146, *ante*.

261 Christmas breakfast in the South often assumes the importance of the Christmas dinner in the North.

of Poe's boyhood. New Year's, 1827, dawned and Poe was in reality, if not wholly in years, a man. Like everyone who is not born with at least a plated spoon in his mouth, he was now confronted with the prime question of every man's life — "Wherewith should he eat and wherewithall should he be clothed?" The store of *Ellis & Allan* seems to have been the most obvious answer, but this distasteful solution was not offered him. Conditions at home must have been unusually uncomfortable and, for a time, probably during the last of the holidays, Poe went down to his "father's" plantation, "The Lower Byrd" in Goochland County, to avoid the painful scenes in the big city house, and the trials of seeing his friends depart for the University leaving him behind. In the country, too, he could escape those who were hounding him for his debts, for he was now pursued by warrants.

He seems to have returned to Richmond sometime in January and to have talked about, and even begun the reading of law.[262] But this was not definite enough for Mr. Allan who seems to have considered that young Poe had forfeited his chance to become a professional man by his conduct. The older man on his part, however, offered no help in Poe's attempts to obtain employment, although he reproached the boy for "eating the bread of idleness." The stories, related by former biographers, that he was given work in the store of *Ellis & Allan,* are now shown by the dates of letters which have come to light, and the nature of their contents, not to be true. Poe's situation was, indeed, desperate. John Allan would not pay off his debts, or make any compromise which would allow him to return to the University. Neither would he aid him in getting employment, while at the same time he excoriated him for being idle. In the household, Edgar's position had become anomalous; he was, it appears, subject even to the whims, not only of the whites, but of the slaves, too. Indeed, he specifically complains of this. For a young Virginian this was the lowest rung of domestic tyranny. He was in fact trapped, and there is every indication that his foster-father took the occasion

[262] Poe's visit to the country and his attempt to read law are given on the double evidence of James Galt, and Poe himself in one autobiographical story published in Richmond, 1835, see note 150, *ante.*

to rub it in. Probably he deliberately improved the opportunity to make clear to Poe the lesson that the way of the evil doer is hard, and to impress upon him the value of money by allowing him to remain without any at all, and no means of making any. Fiery interviews must have occurred upon the receipt of such letters as this from Charlottesville:

JOHN ALLAN, *Esq., Richmond*

DEAR SIR,

I presume when *you sent* Mr. Poe to the University of Virginia you felt yourself bound to pay all his necessary expenses — one is that each young man is expected to have a servant to attend his room. Mr. Poe did not board with me, but as I had hired a first rate servant who cost me a high price, I consider him under greater obligations to pay me for the price of my servant. I have written you two letters and have never received an answer to either. I beg again, sir, that you will send me the small amount due ($6.25). I am distressed for money and I am informed that you are Rich both in purse and Honor.

Very respectfully,
GEO. W. SPOTSWOOD [229, 263]

From later indications it appears that this bill, along with the others, was never paid. John Allan at one time seems to have planned a public career for Poe, but in his indignation he allowed his foster-son to hang about the house, subject to the petty tyranny of his servants and his own reproaches, and pursued by warrants, which, about the middle of January, it appears began to make Poe's future residence in Richmond, without the aid of his guardian, an impossibility.

Poe was not merely passive under this. He is known to have written a letter to the *Mills Nursery Company* of Philadelphia, a firm with which *Ellis & Allan* had dealings, asking them for employment in that city.[264] His letter was, it appears, referred back to his guardian, who with the written evidence in his hands

[263] The date of this letter is 1st of May, 1827. The other letters, before, were written a month apart. The photostat of one written April 2nd, 1827, is also in the possession of the author. Poe may have received the first himself. It has not been found.

[264] J. H. Whitty *Memoir,* large edition, page xxix.

of Poe's intentions to leave the house, seems to have precipitated a scene more violent than any which had preceded it. Even with a full knowledge of John Allan's character, it would seem impossible that he should be keeping Poe at home merely to make him suffer. He may have had some plan in mind for the boy later, and have simply used the opportunity to impress Poe with the results of extravagance. A little pursuit by bailiffs might perhaps, he may have thought, be a salutary lesson to be more careful in the future, but the evidence all points to the fact that this was not the case. He must have known that his own parsimony was, in the final analysis, the cause of Poe's having run into debt, and, as he made no move to secure his " son " any employment, nor to save him from impending imprisonment, while he continued to reproach him for not paying for his keep, the inference is forced upon us that he desired to have him out of the house; to have done with his interference in the discords of the family; and be rid of the young upstart, " the black-heart," as he called him later, who could if he desired make the family skeletons dance. The scene now shifts again to the library of the Allan house sometime after supper in the evening of March 18, 1827.

The great quarrel, resulting in his leaving the house of John Allan, was the crisis of Poe's life. In point of time it falls about midway in his span of days. In a certain sense, all the events of his youth led up to it, and its results never ceased to affect his manhood. Things were said by both men, which could never be forgiven; it was the decisive turning point in Poe's career. From the mass of evidence now at hand, and the knowledge of the personality and character of those involved, it is amply possible to reproduce what took place.[265]

[265] The publication of the *Valentine Museum Poe Letters* on September, 1925, including correspondence between Poe and John Allan the two days immediately after the quarrel show exactly what took place. The story of this momentous event in Poe's life has hitherto, of necessity, rested on guesswork. The exact date of the quarrel is arrived at by a series of deductions from the dates of correspondence during this period of the end of March, 1827, *viz:* a letter written by John Allan to a sister in Scotland, March 27, 1827. A letter from Poe's creditor Crump, dated March 25, 1827, Poe's two letters to John Allan after the quarrel, and the latter's reply. For the deductions from these I am frankly indebted to Prof. Killis Campbell, and Mrs. Mary Newton Stanard's excellent comments in the *Valentine Museum Poe Letters.*

John Allan must have confronted Poe with the Mills Nursery letter, and have demanded of him whether it was his intention to leave Richmond as he indicated, or stay and work off his debts. Stared in the face by his own handwriting, Poe took the bit in his teeth and spoke his mind, reproaching his guardian for his parsimony to him at the University. John Allan could counter this by denouncing Edgar's extravagance and dissipation there, which must have brought up the subject of the gambling debts, a sore point with them both. This seems to have been the main bone of controversy. Poe urged that he be allowed to continue his course at the University by having his just debts paid there; the rest he felt he could shoulder later himself. His conduct during the last three months at the University, probably since John Allan's visit, had, he represented, been exemplary, and he had stood high in his classes. John Allan absolutely refused to send him back to Charlottesville. He seems to have had an idea that Poe should have continued at home to complete his studies. "French, mathematics, and the classics," he afterward specifically mentions. Evidently he had some vague idea of a professional career for Poe still in mind. It was this rock upon which their further possibility of voyaging together split. From Poe's and John Allan's letters of the two days immediately following the quarrel it is quite evident that Poe desired to continue his course at the University with the idea of a literary future in mind. Even while so harassed in Richmond between January and March, 1827, it is probable that he continued to work upon his poems. John Allan regarded his time spent on these as idling, and he seems to have made it a condition that if Poe remained in the house it must be on his guardian's terms. Poe could either remain and pursue the studies which would "promote the end," — the "eminence" in public life to which John Allan says he had taught him to aspire, — or he could get out! For a literary career the older man had no sympathy and he would not permit his "son" to idle around the house while engaged in any scribbling, nor would he make it possible for him to return to the University with such an end in view, indeed, he would not permit that at all. The reading of law is rather clearly implied, and Poe, it seems, was given the night

to think it over. He was left for a few hours definitely at the parting of the ways.

During the night of March 18, 1827, Edgar Allan Poe lying in his bed in his room in the Allan house after the momentous interview with his guardian, made the great decision of his life. He decided not to submit to John Allan's dictation of his future, nor to accept the conditions laid down, even if forced out upon the world. Let us be fair, there were some ugly connotations to this determination; it was "ungrateful," and it would bring pain to several yearning hearts, among them Poe's, but it was nevertheless a great decision and a brave one. Comfort had been weighed in the balance with pride and the potentialities of genius, and comfort had been found wanting. The possibility of fame and honor had deliberately been preferred to wealth. More, although, perhaps he could not know it, starvation and poverty had been chosen. That they were risked, Poe must have known.

From his letter to John Allan later, on the afternoon of the same day, it is plain that the final break occurred on the morning of the nineteenth of March. The discussion was probably resumed at the breakfast table. No doubt John Allan asked for Poe's decision and Poe told him what it was. In addition he said that it was his opinion that John Allan's real reason for not sending him back to the University was that he was too parsimonious to do so. This declaration seems to have been followed by an outburst of extreme anger on the part of the older man, who had a violent temper and a sharp tongue. By this time the whole house must have been in an uproar, the harsh voice of the furious Scotchman and the pounding of his cane on the floor advertised to the household the extremity of his anger, nor could the shrill strained tones of Edgar's replies have reassured the frightened ladies and scared servants. That the young upstart whom he regarded as the object of his charity was about to shake off his dominance, must have come as a terrible shock to the older man. The scene seems to have ended in a furious round of mutual insults; both had a gift of irony and were in possession of facts that hurt. Poe's self-confidence in his future seemed insufferable — "let him find out what it means to starve," thought John Allan — predicted that

Poe would soon be starving in the streets — and ordered him to quit the house. His command was carried out immediately and literally, for Poe dashed out of the door with nothing but what he had on.

From the letters between the two which immediately followed, it is now possible for the first time to follow Poe's movements accurately.[265] Poe left John Allan's house on the morning of Monday, March 19, 1827. Having no place to go, characteristically enough, his first place of refuge was a tavern. On the afternoon of the same day he writes John Allan from the *Court House Tavern,* Richmond, a three page letter. The letter is headed " Richmond, Monday," and is undated.[265] He addresses his " father " as " Sir."

Poe says that after his treatment of the day before and the quarrel which had taken place that morning, that he hardly expects John Allan to be surprised at the contents of the letter. His determination is at last taken unalterably, however, to find some place in the wide world where he will not be treated as his guardian has treated him, and that, as he has been long considering such a move, Mr. Allan need not think that his departure is the result of passion, and that he is already hoping to return. Poe then proceeds to rehearse his reasons for his decision.

From the time he has been able to think on any subject he says, he had been ambitious, and had been taught by John Allan himself to hope for a high position in public life. Therefore, a college education was what he most ardently desired. He continues by asserting that this had been denied him in a moment of caprice because he disagreed with his guardian in an opinion. This meant that he told John Allan the real reason for his keeping him from college was that he was too parsimonious to send him there. Naturally enough the older man would not have agreed to that, in spite of the fact. Poe also tells his " father " that he has overheard him telling others that he had no affection for his ward, and as John Allan could not have known that Poe was listening, his assertion could only be taken to be true. Furthermore, John Allan had ordered him to quit the house (" often " seems to be understood here) and had continually upbraided him for eating the bread of charity while at the same time refusing to remedy

the conditions by obtaining work for him. Lastly, — and the charge is significant from as proud a spirit as Poe's, — his guardian had taken a cruel delight in exposing the boy before those from whom he hoped to obtain advancement, and had subjected him, he says, completely, not only to the members of the white family, but to the slaves.

He ends by entreating his " father " to at least send him his trunk containing his clothes and books, and a sum of money sufficient to pay his way to some Northern city and support him there for a month until he can obtain a position and earn enough to keep himself at the University. He asks that his trunk and effects be sent to him at the *Court House Tavern* with some money, as he is in dire need, and he adds, that if the request is not complied with, he trembles at the consequences. A postcript informs his guardian that it depends upon him whether he sees or hears from the writer again.

The letter bears every impress of being written by one who found himself insulted and wronged beyond all bearing. The hint of suicide is significant; evidently Poe would rather kill himself than return. He was already undergoing the pains of hunger.

Having received no answer to this, the next day, Tuesday, Poe writes John Allan again. He begs him to send him his trunk and his clothes, doing his guardian the grace to say that, as he had not received his clothes, he must suppose John Allan had not gotten his first letter. His necessity, he says, is extreme. He has not tasted any food since the morning before, has no place to sleep and is roaming about the streets almost exhausted. His guardian's prediction will be fulfilled unless he obtains his trunk and clothes and enough money to go to Boston, $12.00. If John Allan will not give the money to him, Poe asks him to lend it till he can obtain a position. He says he sails Saturday, — the day he refers to in 1826 fell on March 26th, — and he closes by a pathetic message of affection and love to all at home, and a postscript saying he has not a cent in the world with which to buy food.

John Allan sent neither the trunk nor the money. Before receiving the second of Poe's letters, he had replied to the first.

In justice to the older man it must be said that his letter shows no trace of passion, it is, indeed, so calm and judicial as to be utterly cold. Its studied periods, to one who had been without food for a day when he received it, must have been far from satisfying.

Mr. Allan says that he is not surprised at anything that Poe may do or say, he reminds him of his debt for his rearing and education already received and admits that he had taught him to be ambitious for a high place in public life, but he adds, *Don Quixote, Gil Blas, Joe Miller* and such books could not be expected to promote such a career. Evidently these had been a bone of contention, and John Allan did not approve of reading "novels." We also learn elsewhere that he abhorred Byron. He defends himself from Poe's charges (and he is distinctly on the defensive in this letter) by saying that his reproaches for Poe's idleness were only made to urge him to perfect himself in the mathematics and the languages. *That Poe has not shown any intention to comply with his wishes,* (evidently in the matter of the direction which his studies were to take) *is the only subject upon which he says he cares to be understood.* He also adds, and we are bound to credit him in this with being sincere, that unless Poe's heart is made of marble, he can judge for himself whether he has not given his foster-father good reason to fear for him in more ways than one. He insists that his only reason for reprimanding his son was to correct his faults, and that for the rest of the charges he has no answer, as the world will reply to them. But he ends with a taunt. Now, he says — Since Poe has declared his independence — the first result is that he must tremble for the consequences unless the man, whose support he has just shaken off, will send him some *money*. With that word his correspondence with his foster-son ceased for two years.

If any doubt remains, this letter makes ultimately clear that the cause of Poe's final break with John Allan was the latter's determination to force Poe into a career he did not care to follow. As one reads the confident and admonitory periods of this self-contained letter, addressed by the man in the comfortable house in Richmond to the youth who was hungry on the city streets, it is only natural to recall the remark of Cromwell made upon

another pregnant occasion to some self-righteous gentlemen, " Bethink you, bethink you, in the Bowels of Christ, ye may be wrong! " Such a possibility seems never to have troubled John Allan. Strangely enough, in the matter of his choice as to the future career and the treatment of his foster-son, he appeals in the same letter to the judgment of the world. All the world now knows the answer. But, perhaps, this is unfair, — what could one expect of a youth who deliberately preferred *Don Quixote* to insults and mathematics?

Poe says that he is sailing for Boston on the next Saturday, March 24th, after the writing of the letter, but he also says he is penniless. It would seem as if his sailing were largely contingent upon the receipt of the $12 which he says the passage will cost. From the copy of John Allan's letter, originally in the *Ellis & Allan Files,* it is evident he sent Poe no money. The immediate sailing for Boston must, therefore, have been deferred. Tradition, circumstantial evidence and direct testimony all point to the fact that it was.[266]

Poe tells his " father " that he will receive letters at the *Court House Tavern,* evidently this was a temporary arrangement, as he had no money, he could not have stayed there. He seems to have gone to stay at Mrs. Richardson's tavern where he was known, and where his friend Ebenezer Burling was an habitué about the bar. That *Richardson's Tavern was* Poe's hiding place during the few days that he remained in Richmond after the quarrel with John Allan, rests on direct testimony, for Dabney Danbridge, one of the slaves of the Allan household, told persons still living in Richmond that he carried packages from the Allan household to Poe while he was there, but " Dab " did not dare to reveal the fact to the members of the family. " Mars Eddie " was a favorite with the servants, and it is probable, that finding

[266] The editor of the *Valentine Museum Poe Letters,* Mrs. Mary Newton Stanard, has very cleverly, and in a scholarly way, suggested that Poe sailed from Richmond on the ship " Carrier," Captain Gill. The deduction is made from the dates of letters and the files of the *Boston Commercial Gazette* between March 26 and April 7, 1827. If so, Poe arrived in Boston on April 7, 1827. The author, here, is inclined to think that, for the reasons given in the text, the weight of evidence is against Poe's having sailed on the " Carrier " as early as March 24th.

John Allan would not send him his clothes, he prevailed on the house servants to bring them to him. In this way, too, he must have gotten the manuscripts of his poems published a month or so later. *These he would hardly have had in his hand when he ran out of the house.* Dabney Danbridge also said that during this time he carried notes for Poe to a young lady of the neighborhood whom his young master admired. She was at that time boarding with a Mrs. Juliet J. Drew nearby.

It is very likely that Frances Allan saw Poe's letters to her husband. At any rate she seems to have become aware of Poe's intentions to leave Richmond, and must have created a scene, for she prevailed on Mr. Allan to stop Poe's departure and the captains of the ships about the port were warned not to take him. Not caring to offend the head of a great firm with whom many of them traded, the avenue of departure was closed to Poe by the ship captains. Frances Allan must have been hoping for a reconciliation, and her husband doubtless thought that his recalcitrant ward would soon be starved into submission. Both Mrs. Allan and Miss Valentine appear to have supplied Poe with some small sums of money, as he must have had some upon which to live during the interim.[267] John Allan did not send it, and in Poe's condition of debt he could scarcely have borrowed any. The amount at best was small, and only sufficed to last him for a few weeks, until May twenty-sixth to be exact.

In order to save himself from being arrested on a debtor's warrant, and to conceal his departure, Poe now assumed the name of Henri Le Rennét, and having persuaded Burling to join him, left Richmond, probably on some coastwise vessel for Norfolk. Burling had a small boat on the James in which the two boys had formerly made many a "voyage," and they seem now to have joined company for a real adventure.

Exactly what took place in Norfolk will probably never be known. Burling was drunk when he left Richmond, and he began to take a melancholy view of the future as he sobered up. Probably there was some difficulty in obtaining a berth aboard a ship.

[267] The traditions to this effect seem to have come later from Miss Valentine herself.

Burling returned to Richmond, evidently before Poe sailed, saying he had gone abroad. Either there had really been some talk of this, or the tale had been agreed upon to throw the family off the scent, and to put a quietus on the warrants. The latter was probably the main factor in Poet's *incognito,* then and for sometime afterward. That Frances Allan thought Poe had gone abroad is shown by the fact that four or five persons afterward saw two letters which she wrote to him with a foreign address. Burling simply got "cold feet" and dropped out. He was a weak and dissipated youth who died some few years later of cholera, and disappears from the record. Poe, however, did not go abroad, but persisted in his decision to get to Boston, probably because of its being a literary center, where, if his contemplated book of poems was published, it would receive a better chance of being noticed than if it emanated from Richmond. He may also have been influenced in his decision by his mother's injunction "to cherish the city of his birth," and have intended to look up the old friends of his parents. At any rate he arrived in Boston certainly by the middle of April, 1827. There is some evidence that he worked his way north on a coal-ship.[268]

Frances Allan is said to have been heart-broken; to one in her condition, the bitter quarrel between the two men of her household, followed by the loss of her "dear boy" must have been crushing. Poe never saw her again.[269] Her affection attempted to follow him across the sea where she and John Allan thought he had gone,[270] for Poe received from her, sometime during 1827, two letters which are said by those who saw them to have exonerated him from all blame in the dissensions of the Allan household. These may have reached him at Boston or Fort Moultrie, or he

[268] In many of the stories which Poe afterward told of these adventures, a "coal-ship" remains a constant factor among much romance. See specifically Woodberry, 1909, vol. I, page 67 — Poe's story in Baltimore to Nathan C. Brooks. Not much stress can be laid on this evidence, however.

[269] Poe returned just too late to attend her funeral. See Chapter XII, page 232.

[270] In his letter to his sister in Scotland, dated March 27, 1827, John Allan specifically says "I'm thinking Edgar has gone to sea . . . etc." This looks as if at that date Mr. Allan was *not at all sure where* Poe had gone, despite Poe's earlier statement. John Allan never trusted Poe's statements then or later, especially in letters.

may have received them after their return to the writer when he came back home. At any rate their existence is too well established to doubt.[271] Poe's arrival in Boston sometime in the early part of April of 1827 is now no longer a matter of conjecture and all stories about his going to Greece, getting in trouble over passports at St. Petersburg, Russia, and being rescued by the intervention of the American Consul, Henry Middleton, the visit to France, and having his portrait painted by Inman while in London, are at once and forever dismissed as legends. Poe's movements from January, 1827, to February, 1829, are no longer "mysterious" but a matter of record.

In the meantime things at the Allan house in Richmond seem to have taken their usual way — that of John Allan's. Mrs. Allan grew feebler, and the master of the establishment went grimly about his affairs, except for the anxiety of his wife, taking matters very coolly. In a letter written from Richmond, March 27, 1827, to one of his sisters in Scotland, he covers three pages defending his administration of his uncle's will and ends with a few significant sentences about domestic affairs:

> . . . though Mrs. Allan (is) occupying one of the airiest and pretty places about Richmond, it seems to make no improvement in her — it is indeed a lovely spot. . . . Miss Valentine is as fat and hearty as ever, I'm thinking Edgar has gone to Sea to seek his own fortunes. . . .[272]

How obstinate of Mrs. Allan not to improve in so "airy" a mansion when her sister was heartier than ever! What could be the reason? Perhaps the air was not so salubrious after all; even Edgar seems to have sought a different atmosphere. "I'm think-

271 These letters were long cherished by Poe. His wife, Virginia, is known to have had them about the time of her death, when she read them to Mrs. Shew. See the letter from Mrs. Shew to Ingram, Poe's biographer, now in the Ingram collection, University of Virginia. In this, Mrs. Shew (then married a second time) says these letters were the *second* Mrs. Allan's. This is an obvious error, although she is quoting from her diary (sic). It can positively be stated that the second Mrs. Allan never wrote any letters to Poe.

272 From the *Ellis & Allan Papers*, Library of Congress, Washington, D. C., photostat in possession of the author. Also referred to in connection with the William Galt will, Chapter VII, page 117, this volume. Also for further quotation, see note 165.

ing," says John Allan — one wonders. By this time he knew most of the story of the runaway, even to the name which Poe assumed, for on the very desk upon which he wrote the " airy " letter to Scotland, was some mail which the fortune-hunting Edgar never received. Among it was this letter:[273]

Dinwiddie County, March 25, 1827

(*Mr.* Edgar A. Poe)

Dear Sir:

When I saw you in Richmond a few days ago I should have mentioned the difference between us if there had not been so many persons present. I must of course, as you did not mention it to me, enquire if you ever intend to pay it. If you have not the money, write me word that you have not, but do not be perfectly silent. I should be glad if you would write to me as a friend. There can certainly be no harm in your avowing candidly that you have no money, if you have none, but you can say when you can pay me if you cannot now. I heard when I was in Richmond that Mr. Allan would probably discharge all your debts. If mine was a gambling debt I should not think much of it. But under the present circumstances I think very strongly of it. Write to me upon the receipt of this letter and tell me candidly what is the matter.

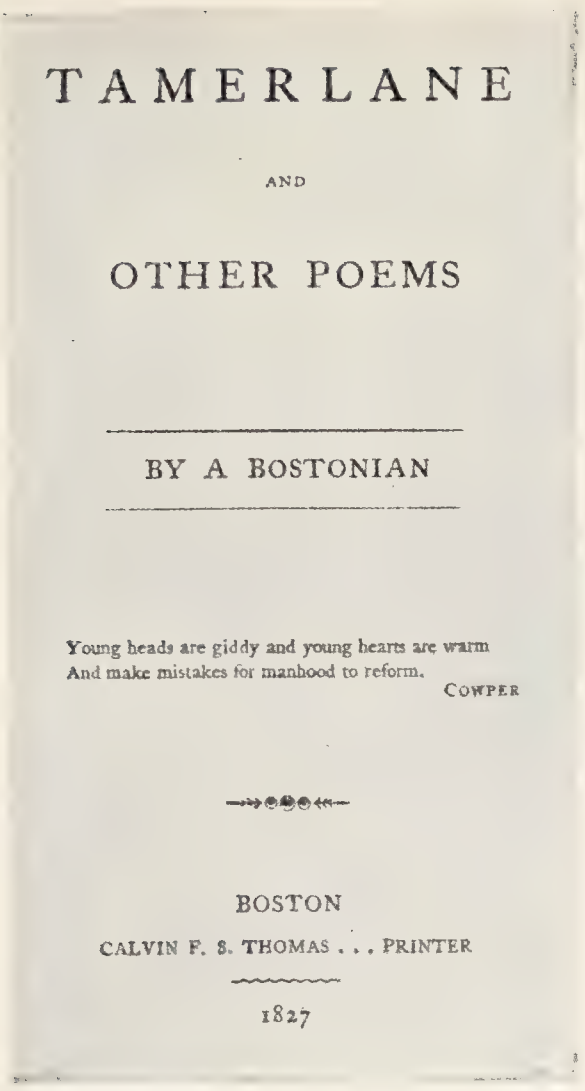
Your friend Edward G. Crump

Under the endorsement " to E. A. Poe " John Allan has added in his own hand " alias — Henri Le Rennét." Poe never got the letter, and it remains to this day in the file where his guardian quietly placed it. Meanwhile, what of Henri Le Rennét?

Upon his arrival in Boston, Poe probably tried to look up some of the old friends of his mother and father. His knowledge of such, at best, must have been slight; his parents had been obscure, and they had been forgotten in Boston for sixteen years.

In some way or other he became acquainted with a youth of about his own age of the name of Calvin Thomas. There was *said* to have been some connection between the families of the two boys which was not a pleasant one. A Miss Thomas had at one time

[273] Crump's letter was written in Dinwiddie County on March 25th and must have taken a day or so for transmittal and delivery at Richmond. John Allan writes his sister from Richmond on March 27th. Both letters therefore must have been in his hands about the same day.



TAMERLANE

AND

OTHER POEMS

BY A BOSTONIAN

Young heads are giddy and young hearts are warm
And make mistakes for manhood to reform.
COWPER

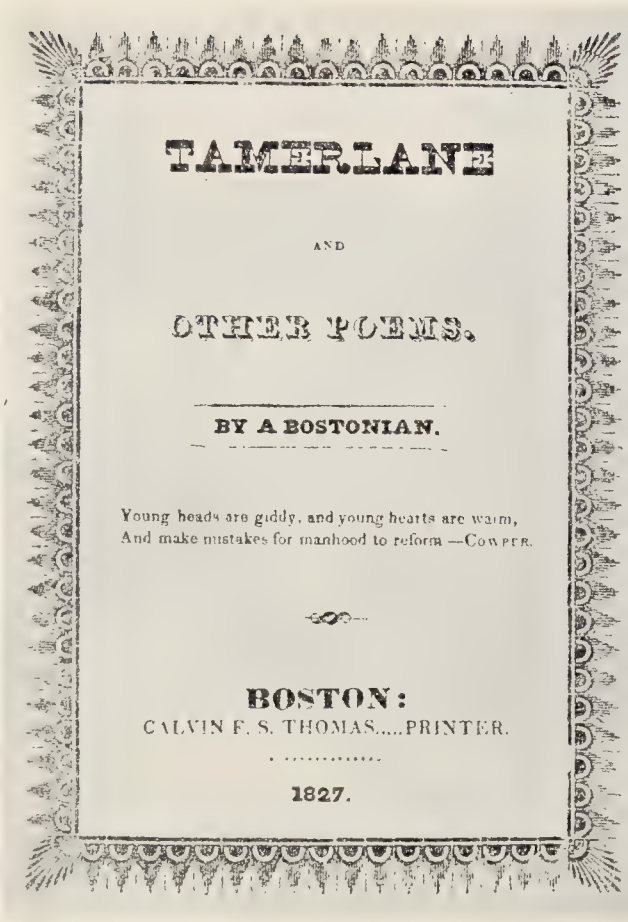
BOSTON
CALVIN F. S. THOMAS . . . PRINTER

1827

Title Page of *Tamerlane and Other Poems*

Boston 1827

Edgar Allan Poe's first published volume



TAMERLANE

AND

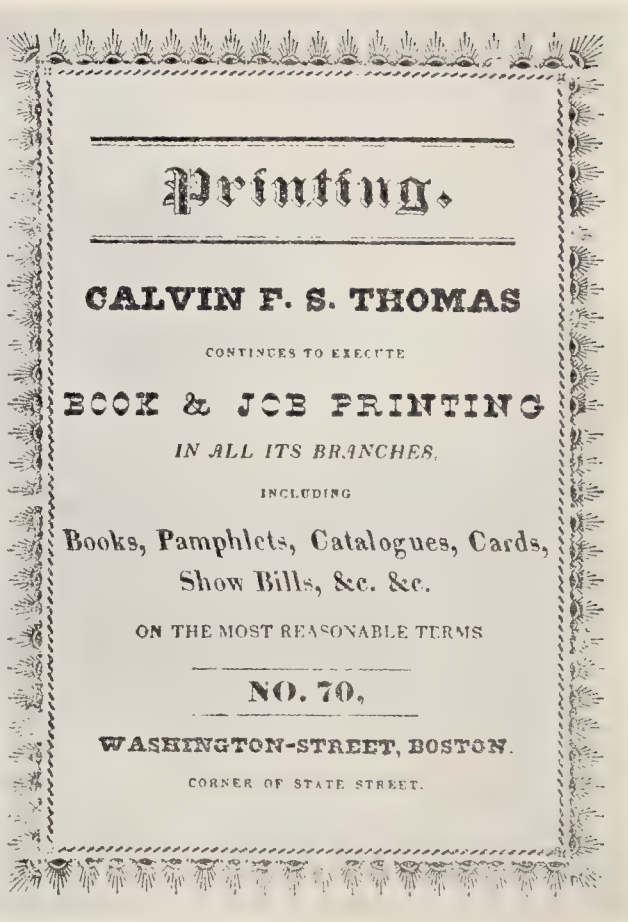
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BOSTON:
CALVIN F. S. THOMAS.....PRINTER.

1827.



Printing.

CALVIN F. S. THOMAS

CONTINUES TO EXECUTE

BOOK & JOB PRINTING

IN ALL ITS BRANCHES,

INCLUDING

Books, Pamphlets, Catalogues, Cards,
Show Bills, &c. &c.

ON THE MOST REASONABLE TERMS

NO. 70,

WASHINGTON-STREET, BOSTON.

CORNER OF STATE STREET.

The Front and Back Wrappers of *Tamerlane and Other Poems*

Containing the advertisement by the printer of his trade and place of business. *Grace Poe Items*

Reproduction from photographs. Courtesy of John J. Snyder, Esq., of Pelham, N. Y.

been in the same theatrical company with the Poes.[274] Young Thomas and his people had at one time lived in Norfolk and came later to Boston, with their grandmother, who wished to educate them there. They were originally New Yorkers. Whether there had really been any family intimacy between the Poes and Thomases seems very doubtful. One thing is certain, however, the two youths became friends, the result of which was the publication of Poe's first volume.[275]

Calvin F. S. Thomas was the proprietor of a little job printing shop at "No. 70, Washington Street, Boston, Corner of State Street." The style of type fonts and printers ornaments which he used show that he had *newly* set up in a small business, which he had probably recently bought from someone else. He was about nineteen years old and could have had little more than an apprentice's brief experience at his trade. To the hands of this tyro Poe confided the printing of a book which is now one of the most sought-after and most costly in the English language. It was *Tamerlane and Other Poems*. This was probably sometime about the beginning of May, 1827. The time of Poe's arrival in Boston precludes its being much earlier, and the date of his ensuing enlistment in the army fixes it as being sometime within the month of May.

[274] The *Norfolk Herald,* July 6, 1811 — From this probable accidental resemblance of names there has been an attempt in some quarters to connect the name of David Poe and the actress, Miss Thomas. There is no evidence that this Miss Thomas was a relation of Calvin Thomas, the printer. Poe may never, as Prof. Woodberry thinks (*Atlantic Monthly,* December, 1884) have told his real name to Thomas. The printer never seems to have known that he *had* known Poe despite the latter's great fame afterward. Thomas was a very obscure person. He later moved to New York, Buffalo, and Springfield, Missouri, where he died in 1876. Communications from a Miss Martha Thomas, daughter of Calvin, elicited the information that the Thomases knew nothing about Poe and had no records of the Boston print shop nor any copies of *Tamerlane and Other Poems.* See letter of Miss Martha Thomas to Prof. Woodberry — Woodberry, vol. I, 1909, Notes, page 360. Also *Atlantic Monthly,* December, 1884. The matter is very obscure and equally unimportant. The fact that both Poe and Thomas had lived in Virginia may have brought them together. The real point is that Calvin Thomas was a printer who printed Poe's first book.

[275] Poe's idea of earning money to go back to the University seems to have quickly disappeared at this time under the stress of poverty and no work. That he persevered in publishing his poetry shows how vital a place his desire for literary recognition held in his mind. The pitiable result of this sacrifice was the practical suppression of the volume.

Where and how Poe was living at this time is unknown. Probably on the remnants of his Richmond money. There is a story of his having obtained work on a Boston newspaper. The preparation of even this little volume for the press, together with the inevitable revision of the text, must have consumed considerable time and have precluded other work. By the time the book was printed he must have been penniless. Thomas, of course, was only a printer and had no means of publishing, so that the bulk of the edition, — said to have been forty or fifty copies at most, — remained on his hands. Poe probably bought a few copies himself with the last of his dwindling stock of coins; two books are known to have been sent out to reviewers.[276] Poe afterward said that the edition "was suppressed for private reasons." The "private reasons" are not hard to guess! There was no way to distribute the book when it was printed; no one who would buy it, if it had been put on sale; and the author was out of funds. *Tamerlane and Other Poems* was a pamphlet of about forty pages, $6\frac{3}{8}$ by $4\frac{1}{8}$ inches, bound in yellow, tea-colored covers. There have been at least three reprints but only four genuine copies of the first edition are known to exist. The author's name is not printed, the title page giving only " By a Bostonian," and a motto which happens to be the same as that chosen for Tennyson's first book, *Poems by Two Brothers*.

Just why Poe published the book anonymously is an interesting speculation. Evidently from this, and the fact that he later enlisted under an assumed name, he was very anxious not to have his whereabouts known, probably mainly to prevent his being followed by duns and warrants. " By a Bostonian," certainly looks as if he did not desire to hail from Richmond. Poe knew that the book would have a better chance of being reviewed in the Northern magazines if it came from Boston, or it may have been merely a sentimental compliment to his mother and the lines she had written on the back of her picture of that city. It was, of course, the city of his birth, but the place where he was starving could have been little more.

[276] The *United States Review and Literary Gazette*, August, 1827. *The North American Review* for October, 1827. For a full description of *Tamerlane* see Killis Campbell, *Poems of Poe*, New York, 1917.

We would like very much to know just what Edgar Poe carried with him from the house of John Allan in Richmond. He must have rescued from his room the manuscripts of the poems which appeared in Boston a few months later. Among them were probably some of those which Mr. Allan had shown a few years before to the schoolmaster, Mr. Clarke. There were enough of them, and some of them were of such length, as to show conclusively that their composition must have covered a period of several years prior to their printing. They prove Poe to have been hard at work at his craft, consciously and determinedly a poet. In his preface he says in part:

> The greater part of the poems which compose this little volume were written in the year 1821–2, when the author had not completed his fourteenth year. They were of course not intended for publication; why they are now published concerns no one but himself. Of the smaller pieces very little need be said, they perhaps savour too much of egotism; but they were written by one too young to have any knowledge of the world but from his own breast. . . .

It is chiefly for the knowledge of that young breast, which they reveal, that the poems are of value now. *Tamerlane* is an ambitious piece, which seems to have been written later than the others, at the University,[277] as it bears the ear-marks of the type of verse and the kind of semi-classical theme which the influences of the formal education of the day would supply to scribbling youth. It is chiefly of interest, though, in the light of what followed later, and as an indication of the kind of material which attracted Poe. For the rest, they show us a sensitive boy with an innate sense of melody, a surprising order of technique for one so young, and a spirit, which, while it found great charm in nature and the people with whom it came in contact, valued landscapes and persons less for themselves, than for the dreams and moods which they invoked. Thus Poe already possessed the two main artistic factors that make a poet. He had moods which were of enough value to be worthy of being recorded; and he had the artistry to record them successfully. In *Tamerlane and Other*

277 Its connection with Elmira has already been noted. This also helps to place it as later work.

Poems these qualities are best exhibited in *The Dreamer,* and *The Lake* —

> In spring of youth it was my lot
> To haunt of the wide world a spot
> The which I could not love the less —
> So lovely was the loneliness
> Of a wild lake, with black rock bound,
> And the tall pines that towered around.
>
> But when the Night had thrown her pall
> Upon the spot, as upon all,
> And the mystic wind went by
> Murmuring in melody —
> Then — ah then I would awake
> To the terror of the lone lake.
>
> Yet that terror was not fright,
> But a tremulous delight —
> A feeling not the jewelled mine
> Could teach or bribe me to define —
> Nor love — although the lover were thine.
>
> Death was in that poisonous wave
> And in its gulf a fitting grave
> For him who thence could solace bring
> To his lone imaging —
> Whose solitary soul could make
> An Eden of that dim lake.

This poem is doubly interesting because it is the first which shows definitely how early the strange spell of melancholy and the preoccupation with death entered into his work. The young boy who wrote it must clearly have had periods of extreme sensitivity when physical existence became actually painful, together with a weird sense of the mystery of inanimate things that was to haunt him through life. So far as we know, his real mother and Mrs. Stanard were the only two instances in which he had actually, thus far, experienced the trial of death. That a sense of grief and a feeling of brooding sorrow was thus early engraved on him, the lines bear witness. It is true that early youth is more often preoccupied by the themes of death and mutability than middle

age, but there seems to be an unusual sense of them expressed here.

The realization that his poems were to become irrevocable in print, would spur Poe to further revisions, so that while he tells us that, " the greater part of the poems which compose this little volume were written . . . when the author had not completed his fourteenth year," we can take this with a grain of salt, as they undoubtedly had been much revised at home, at the University, and in Boston where they went to the press. The *format,* printing, and punctuation [278] of the book show that Poe appreciated the importance of the mechanical side of his art, and possessed both the education and the inclination to turn out a literate, although a typographically bungled piece of work. Thomas, the printer, who was only a year older than Poe, could not have been a past master in his art [279] and the passable result, despite some mistakes, must largely be attributed to the active collaboration and supervision of Poe himself.

With the publication of *Tamerlane and Other Poems,* Poe's funds (or the patience of his landlady) seem to have been completely exhausted. His situation was desperate; he was not capable of sustained physical labor, even if he could have secured employment, and an appeal to Richmond was unthinkable. In this extremity of pride and hunger he remembered his former military episodes in the " Junior Richmond Volunteers," or on the drill ground at the University, and joined the army.

The War Department records show that Poe enlisted in the United States Army on May 26, 1827, under the assumed name of Edgar A. Perry.[280] He gave his age as twenty-two years, although he was only eighteen, and stated that he was born in Boston and was by occupation a clerk. The enlistment records describe him as having grey eyes, brown hair, a fair complexion

[278] The punctuation already shows many of Poe's peculiarly individual ideas about this " art," later developed to a " science " after his connection with the *Southern Literary Messenger.*

[279] Thomas was not even a member of the local printers' union.

[280] All of the War Department records relative to Poe's connection with the United States Army, are taken from the text of the documents as given by Prof. Woodberry in his article in the *Atlantic Monthly* for December, 1884. The search for this material was made by direction of the President of the United States.

and a height of five feet, eight inches. Without further delay the new recruit was assigned to Battery " H," of the First Artillery then stationed in Boston Harbor at Fort Independence.[281] In the barracks there, Poe spent the time from the end of May to the end of October, 1827. During this period he must have undergone his training as a recruit, but he seems early to have gravitated into the quartermaster's department where his clerical training and mercantile experience with *Ellis & Allan* would recommend him. The assertion that Poe enlisted in the army as a result of a spree had no foundation in fact and little probability behind it. From the time of his enlistment to his discharge we know that his conduct was so exemplary as to lead to his rapid promotion, and he was officially recommended upon discharge as being " sober," an unusual military virtue at that time.

Nevertheless, Poe's enlistment is significant of the fact that he already found himself unable to cope with the world in civilian life. His tender rearing, his education, his desire for leisure and solitude and, above all, his nervous, impulsive and erratic characteristics, which the events of the last few years had tended to accentuate, now undoubtedly began to be tremendous handicaps in a world which despises a dreamer, and puts a premium on physical endurance and insensibility. Poe was stretched from now on between two drums of a rack that kept turning slowly, torturing him until they pulled him apart. Every turn of the screw of the one to which his feet were bound, was bent on dragging him down to the callous level of the mediocrity about him, while the cords about his head dragged him ever upward, insisting that to be a poet and a dreamer, he must become hyper-sensitive, see colors beyond the visible spectrum, and hear whispers of voices inaudible to the average ear. It was to the latter world that he belonged. Stretched between the two he was torn apart; occasionally relieving the tension of the unremitted torture by the anæsthetics of feminine sympathy, alcohol and, towards the last, — opium. The result of each attempt at relief being, of course, a lowering of his power to withstand. Combined with this was, perhaps, an unfortunate heredity.

[281] Poe seems to have joined his command about June 1, 1827.

Of the life of the young artilleryman at Fort Independence, Boston Harbor, in the Summer of 1827, there is very little trace. It was afterward said that at some time during the army episode he wrote letters to his foster-mother dated from St. Petersburg, Russia (sic). Some record of his doings at this time have recently come to light due to the discovery of an old Baltimore publication of 1827 called *The North American.*

To this obscure periodical the elder Poe brother, William Henry Poe, contributed steadily from the Summer of 1827 to the end of the year and the demise of the magazine. His contributions were in both prose and poetry, usually signed " W. H. P." From the nature of these it now seems certain that he was in touch with his brother Edgar in Boston and, perhaps, later from Charleston, for more particularly in a story called *The Pirate,* W. H. Poe treats romantically the episode of the love affair of Edgar with Elmira Royster, and republishes in two instances poems from *Tamerlane* over his own initials and as extracts. *Dreams* in a new version appears signed " W. H. P."

From this evidence, it seems undeniable that Edgar, while in the army, corresponded with Henry and sent him a copy of *Tamerlane* from Boston.[282]

It is possible that if, at this period of his life, Poe could have found the shelter of some sympathetic and understanding influence capable of imparting a feeling of calm and security to his intellect, and physical comfort conducive to the free working and growth of his mind, this continent might have seen the flowering of a genius which would have demanded a respectful and unqualified admiration for its unblighted blossoming, rather than a belated recognition in which scorn and pity have slowly given way to acceptance. Instead of that, the most sensitive nervous system, and one of the keenest intellects then extant in North America, was treated to a round of spiritual and mental outrage

282 *The Happiest Day, the Happiest Hour,* from *Tamerlane and Other Poems,* 1827. Republished by Henry Poe, 1827. The credit for the discovery of *The North American* containing the work of Henry Poe belongs to Dr. Thomas Ollive Mabbott and Captain F. L. Pleadwell. It is possible that portions of *The Pirate* are Edgar Poe's. Dr. Thomas Ollive Mabbott and I have collected all this material in *Poe's Brother,* Doran, 1926, a book to which the reader is referred.

inherent for any higher nature in the ranks of a regular artillery regiment lying idle in barracks during a time of profound peace. The army of one of the most warlike republics which has ever troubled the world, is not to be blamed if it is not so organized as to provide an ideal home for neurasthenic young poets; its domestic economy is bound to be of a different order. That Poe did not die at about the same age, and of similar complaint to Chatterton's, in a garret in Boston, Massachusetts, is due to the food, clothes, shelter and refuge from the civil society of the time provided by Battery "H" of the First Regiment of United States Artillery. Of his not unimportant adventures under the eagle, under various circumstances and upon distant shores, we shall shortly learn. In the meantime his physical continuity was assured, but —

> The happiest day — the happiest hour [282]
> My sear'd and blighted heart hath known
> The highest hope of pride and power,
> I feel hath flown.
>
> Of power! said I? yes! such I ween;
> But they have vanished long, alas!
> The visions of my youth have been —
> But let then pass.
>
> And pride, what have I now with thee?
> Another brow may even inherit [283]
> The venom thou hast poured on me —
> Be still, my spirit!

It is a pitiful farewell to youth, an acknowledgment of the futility of the Byronic formula, and a foreboding of the future. The shades of the prison house had begun to descend upon Israfel, but in them his spirit was never to be "still."

On October the 31st, 1827, his Battery was ordered to Fort Moultrie on Sullivan's Island at the mouth of Charleston Harbor, in South Carolina.

[283] This line and the one following can refer only to the fact that Poe felt that a possible heir of his guardian might "inherit" the "venom" which had been heaped on him. It seems to be a patent reference to conditions "at home."

CHAPTER XI
Israfel in Carolina

TROOP movements, in the leisurely days before the coming of railroads, were by water. Outward bound from Fort Independence, Boston Harbor, the army transports moved through the flashing November weather of 1827, sinking the sand dunes of Cape Cod and the blue haze of Nantucket behind them, as they stood far out into the Atlantic to be rid of the perils of the coast. There was, at least for Poe, the pagentry of adventure about it; the sparkle of brass buttons and uniforms; the call of bugles from ship to ship; the bright sails and the banners.[284]

A voyage from Boston, Massachusetts, to Charleston, South Carolina, in a sailing ship was, even with favorable winds, often a matter of several weeks. In the old clipper days a sailing ship stood well out from the coast to avoid the nightmare of all windborne mariners, a lee shore. Hatteras, especially in the Fall, was given a wide berth, and it was the custom of coastwise pilots to make a " long leg " out into the Atlantic.[285]

The whole interlude of Poe's life in the Army, taken in connection with the places he visited, affords a remarkable example of the method the man sometimes followed in working directly from his environment. The story of it might almost be called *How Poe Gathered his Material for a Short Story*. Contrary to the fond and oft repeated opinion of many critics, Poe often found his material in the life and the place about him, and then worked only in a secondary and indirect way from literary sources. He visualized even imaginary localities strongly, and his scenery, although often a

[284] It may be suggested that Henry Poe's having joined the *navy* may have influenced Edgar's joining the *army* in hopes of adventure. Edgar, we now know, became the Byronic hero of Henry's group in Baltimore and the subject of their poetic effusions in *The North American*. See L. A. Wilmer's *Merlin* afterward referred to by Edgar Poe in a complimentary manner.

[285] Poe's touching at the Bermudas is *suggested.*

synthesis of the hills of one place and the lowlands of another, nevertheless, sprang directly from the vistas which he had seen. Out of the strange and impressive environment into which he was about to be plunged for a year, free from the problem of sustenance and with the opportunity for considerable leisure, came directly much of his material for *The Gold Bug, The Oblong Box, The Man that was Used Up,* the *Balloon Hoax,* and bits of the melancholy scenery, and sea and light effects which, from the time of his sojourn in Carolina, haunt so much of his poetry. A comparison of his 1827 and 1829–31 volumes will at once make this apparent. A familiarity with the peculiar nature of the landscape and the section where Poe was about to tarry during 1827–28 will explain the "exotic" sources from which many of his descriptions in prose and poetry are derived.

From November, 1827, to December, 1828, he did garrison duty at Fort Moultrie on Sullivan's Island. Sometime in November of the former year, the army transports from Boston found themselves ". . . in full view of the low coasts of South Carolina," [286] and anchored just under the lee of the walls of the old fortress, near the back channel, where they discharged Battery "H" of the First United States Artillery, bag and baggage, officers and men, among whom was Private Edgar A. Perry, *alias* Henri Le Rennét, *alias* Edgar Allan Poe, doing duty even then as a company clerk.[287] He must have been given quarters somewhere within the bastions of the old fort.

Style is very often the result of the impact of a new environment upon the unsuspected potentialities of artistic personality. "For the first and only time in his life, Poe now found himself in a sub-tropical environment," a district with a highly differentiated fauna and flora, utterly different from anything he had seen so far, either in Virginia or abroad.[288] In addition to this, the place was full of piratical and Revolutionary lore, the very island and

[286] From the *Balloon Hoax.*

[287] See the letter of Lieut. J. Howard given to Poe on his discharge — Chapter XII, page 240.

[288] Prof. C. Alphonso Smith to the author, July 23, 1921, "The point you make seems to me a good one and so far as I know the matter has never been presented as you propose. So far as I know, this was the only really "tropical" background that Poe had ever seen.

the bay upon which he looked had been famous as the haunt of pirates. To the south and west, Fort Sumter, only then beginning to assume the formidable shape of brick and stone so familiar to the reading public of the '60's, looked across a narrow channel at its sister, Fort Moultrie, while a few miles up the harbor could be seen the pillared porches and spires of Charleston, a port which was alive then with ships from all over the world.[289]

Northward and eastward, stretched away from the barrack windows, the long, low, beaches of Sullivan's Island some miles away to an inlet which separated it from the Isle of Palms where the prospect was repeated. The inlet could be breasted by a powerful swimmer like Poe with a few vigorous strokes. The young soldier had only to pass through the portcullis to find himself upon a magnificent beach washed by a summer sea, a firm strand that stretched for miles, with the Gulf Stream on one side, and a low range of sand hills inland, covered with scrub palmetto and myrtles, the home of strange birds, sand butterflies, amusing beetles, and the haunt of great sea-turtles that crawled out by moonlight to lay their eggs. Here and there, at long intervals, was the hut of a lonely hunter or fisherman, far from the little summer settlement then confined to the immediate vicinity of the fort. The one overpowering impression of the place is the continual bell-like breaking of the "sounding sea," the eye-puckering glare of the lime-what sun, and the dirge of the wind through the myrtles, accompanied by a faint, clacking sound like an overtone of eery applause caused by the clapping together of the palms of the palmettoes.

This island of sea-weathered monotonies, driven into Poe's consciousness by the long hours of an idle year, is the home of the Gold Bug. At the beginning of the story he has described it himself.[290]

This island is a very singular one. It consists of little else than the sea-sand, and is about three miles long. Its breadth at no point ex-

289 At the time of Poe's service at Fort Moultrie, Charleston, South Carolina, was one of the great American ports, hundreds of ships clearing weekly.

290 It must be borne in mind that Poe did not write *The Gold Bug* until many years later, 1842. The beach at Sullivan's Island seems to have been "photographed" on his retina.

ceeds a quarter of a mile. It is separated from the mainland by a scarcely perceptible creek, oozing its way through a wilderness of reeds and slime, a favorite resort of the marsh-hen. The vegetation as might be supposed, is scant, or at least dwarfish. No trees of any magnitude are to be seen. Near the western extremity, where Fort Moultrie stands, and where are some miserable frame buildings, tenanted, during summer, by the fugituves from Charleston dust and fever, may be found, indeed, the bristly palmetto; but the whole island with the exception of this western point, and a line of hard beach on the sea-coast, is covered with a dense undergrowth of the sweet myrtle so much prized by the horticulturists of England.[291] The shrub here often attains the height of fifteen or twenty feet, and forms an almost impenetrable coppice, burdening with its fragrance.

Such remote places, haunted by blue herons and other rare and shy bird-life, are, even to-day, the retreats of eccentric characters who find their compensation for loss of contact with their fellows in the observation of nature. Amid the lonely scrub forests of Sullivan's Island during the long hours of his rambles about the place, Poe seems to have encountered such a person, for he says, "In the inmost recesses of this coppice, not far from the eastern or more remote end of the island, Legrand had built himself a small hut which he occupied when I first, by mere accident, made his acquaintance."

That Poe had a generous amount of idle time on his hands while at Fort Moultrie there can be no doubt. He was a member of a coast-guard regiment at a remote and little inspected post during a long era of profound peace. There were not even any lawns to be cut, and the situation of the fort, cut off from the world by what was then a row or sail of several miles from Charleston, curtailed even the social ambitions of the officers, and prevented the garrison from being kept busy about the multifarious trivialities necessarily required of the soldier at a "smart post." The nearest hamlet was Mt. Pleasant, a community whose amusements were strictly confined to the raising of children and the delirious concerts of an orchestra of frogs. Leave in Charleston was the only relaxation of the garrison ("the facilities of

[291] Poe is probably thinking of the Rev. "Dr." Bransby's garden at Stoke Newington, where he cherished exotic shrubs. See Chapter V, page 83.

passage and repassage," says Poe, "were far behind those of the present day!") To these pastimes, Poe seems to have added some conversation with the more cultivated of the officers; swimming, the study of the strange shapes of nature about him, the polishing of verses, excursions in the pages of Moore and Byron, and long hours of wandering along the sounding beaches and the "coppice" of Sullivan's Island.

The orders of the day governing the routine and discipline of the force at Fort Moultrie, show that the garrison rose about five-thirty A.M., policed, breakfasted, and engaged in a short morning's infantry drill, varied from time to time by exercises at the great guns. The passage of time was punctuated by the sharp reports of the sunrise and sunset gun, the strains of the bugles at meal times and retreat, and by nothing more. Beyond this, there was little to do except to play Seven-up on a blanket, or roll dice. Even from these strenuous duties Poe seems to have absolved himself by assuming clerical work with the consequent familiarity and favor of his officers which it entailed. After a few hours of "paper work," we can imagine him "calling it a day," and going outdoors to roam the beaches. To this mode of life, the climate was conducive, and he says:

> The winters in the latitude of Sullivan's Island are seldom very severe, and in the fall of the year it is a rare event indeed when a fire is considered necessary. About the middle of October 18—, there occurred, however, a day of remarkable chilliness. Just before sunset I scrambled my way through the evergreens to the hut of my friend, whom I had not visited for several weeks. . . . A fine fire was blazing upon the hearth. It was a novelty, and by no means an ungrateful one. I threw off an overcoat, took an armchair by the crackling logs, and awaited patiently the arrival of my host.

In such a scene as this *The Gold Bug* begins.

There are several prime factors to the story: The first is the eccentric character of "Mr. William Legrand." He was of an ancient Huguenot family; the next is "Jupiter," the negro servant, and the others are Poe himself, slightly disguised by the first person pronoun, a wonderful, golden, skull-marked beetle, the solution of a mysterious mathematical cipher, a buried pirate

treasure, and the meticulous description of the locality. As an example of Poe's method of assembling material for his *more objective kind* of short story, it is the purpose here to suggest briefly the probable sources of *The Gold Bug*.

The idea of buried treasure is one which would inevitably associate itself in Poe's mind with Sullivan's Island, which was from early colonial times the haunt of pirates. Stede Bonnet himself was captured by a Colonel Rhett of Charleston only a few miles north of Fort Moultrie, and the port itself was early blockaded and its citizens held for ransom by Black Beard. Poe gives his pirate the generic name of " Captain Kidd," who is supposed to have buried his fabled treasure on Long Island, New York. In Poe's day the Isle of Palms immediately north of Sullivan's Island was known as Long Island, and so appears on all old maps. That the suggestion of buried treasure was present, seems fairly clear. " Legrand," the principal figure in the story, although Poe himself is the real hero who *so* cleverly solves the cryptogram,[292] was probably suggested by the very prevalent Huguenot name of Legare (pronounced Le Gree) among the many descendants of French settlers upon the Carolina " sea-islands." There was a minor poet of this name, which is also common in Louisiana. According to the story, " Legrand " hailed from New Orleans. Into the mouth of " Jupiter," the slave or valet, Poe puts the negro dialect of Virginia with which he was familiar, rather than the flat, quacking Gullah *patois* of the Carolina Low Country. " Jupiter " talks like a Richmond darkey. So much for the human elements. When we come to the gold bug itself, " the queerest scarabæus in the world," there is a synthesis of material which is perhaps even more interesting and original.

Poe's Gold Bug Synthesis

The genesis of Poe's " gold bug " seems to have been beyond peradventure some of the beetles which he noticed on his rambles

[292] Poe prided himself upon his ability to solve cryptograms — see Woodberry, vol. 1, 1909, pages 303–304, and his own articles on the subject in *Alexander's Messenger,* Dec. 18, 1839, *Graham's,* July, 1841, etc. This was a later development and the cryptogram in the story belongs to the Philadelphia period of about 1842.

among the sand dunes of Sullivan's Island. A clever synthesis of several of these, together with the legends of pirates, the strange aspects of the lonely landscape, and his well-known flare for the solution of ciphers, give all the necessary factors for the plot. Our immediate concern is with the beetles. In the story, the descriptions are scattered; brought close together in connection with one another, their origin becomes startlingly plain.

To make his "gold bug" Poe evidently super-imposed one upon another several of the beetles common to the Island, taking the long antennæ and the golden tint from one, and the skull markings and shape from another. These, when assembled became the *Scarabœus Caput Hominis,* a bug never seen before or since upon sea or land. We can imagine him, upon some idle sunny day, the young soldier in the scarlet and blue uniform of the artillery, lying upon his stomach amid the sand dunes amusing himself with a piece of manuscript and the gyrations of some unfortunate beetle. The one of which "Jupiter" says, "I nebber did see sich a *deuced* bug — he kicks and he bite eberything what cum near him.[293] I didn't like de look ob de long mouff, myself, nohow, so I wouldn't take hold ob him wid my finger, but I cotch him wid a piece ob paper and stuff a piece of it in his mouff — dat was de way"[294] — and that is the way we can easily see several beetles going home to Fort Moultrie in the pockets of one Edgar Allan Poe, *alias* Perry, to be duly drawn upon paper that evening under the light of the glimmering barrack lantern by a semi-scientific young poet who combined imagination with observation and the use of the artistic pencil. Indeed, it is this very operation of drawing beetles in which we surprise "Legrand" at the opening of the story.

. . . He seated himself at a small table on which were a pen and ink, but no paper. He looked for some in a drawer but found none. 'Never mind,' he said at length, 'this will answer'; and he drew from his waistcoat pocket a scrap of what I took to be very dirty foolscap, and made upon it a rough drawing with the pen. . . . When the design

293 In corrections in his own hand in the Century Association copy of *The Collected Works* once owned by Poe and Griswold, Poe has changed *deuced* to "d——d." See note 299.

294 The quotations are, of course, from *The Gold Bug.*

was complete, he handed it to me without rising. . . . 'Well,' I said, after contemplating it for some moments, 'this *is* a strange *scarabæus*, I must confess; new to me, never saw anything like it before — unless it was a skull, or a death's head, which it more nearly resembles than anything else that has come under my observation. 'A death's head!' echoed Legrand. 'Oh — yes — well, it has something of that appearance *upon paper*, no doubt. The two upper black spots look like eyes, eh? and the longer one at the bottom like a mouth — and then the shape of the whole is oval.' . . .

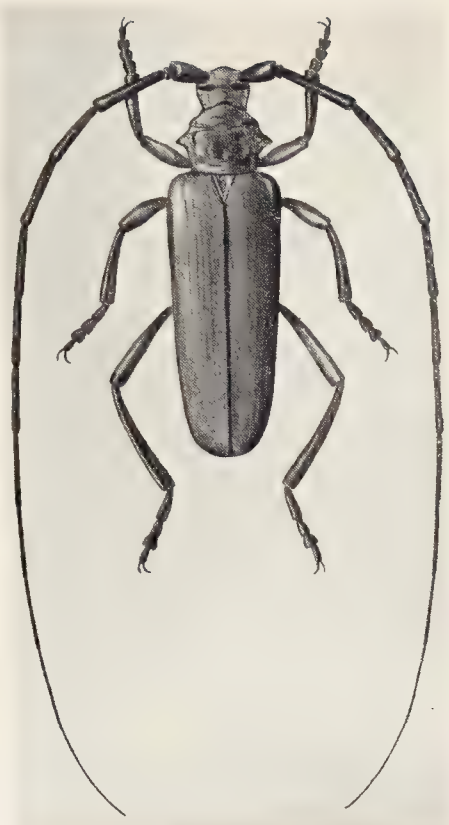
Elsewhere "Legrand" says of the bug, "It is a brilliant gold color — about the size of a large hickory nut, with two jet black spots near one extremity of the back, and another somewhat larger, at the other. . . ." The antennæ, we also learn, are long and accentuated, and the beetle had powerful jaws. With these descriptions in mind we can now proceed to see how Poe played with his beetles to the tune of a charming medley in fact and fancy, the theme of which was the gold bug.

The reader is now asked to accompany an enthusiastic "bug-hunter" upon Sullivan's and Long Island, South Carolina, about one hundred years after Poe's historic visit, and to partake vicariously of the excitements of the chase. Some years ago, it appears, a noted entomologist,[295] armed with the classic butterfly net of science, crossed over from Sullivan's Island to Long Island to collect insects. While he was forcing his way through a dense thicket, a large beetle lit on the end of the dagger leaf of a bristling Spanish Bayonet. The insect was new to him and most beautiful, — nothing like it, he thought, was to be found out of the tropics. It was gleaming with fiery gold, soft satiny green, and dull old-gold — the antennæ nearly three inches long extended in front of the insect as it stood *at attention*.[296]

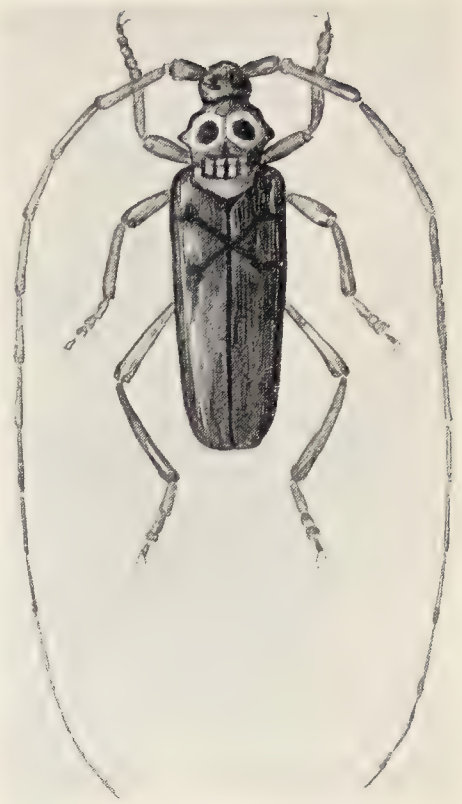
In his excitement, the scientific gentleman missed it with his

[295] Ellison A. Smyth, Jr. — the author is frankly indebted to Prof. Smyth of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute for the description of the capture of the beetles, and for the idea which they suggested to him which are taken from his article in the *Sewanee Review* for January 1, 1910, *Poe's Gold Bug from the Standpoint of an Entomologist*. The text of the article was supplied the author by the Charleston Museum, Charleston, South Carolina, together with specimens of the beetles described, captured on Sullivan's Island.

[296] "At attention" — with antennæ pointing. This is the position which suggested to Poe his idea for using the beetle as a "treasure pointer."







Poe's Gold Bug Synthesis

Suggested by Prof. Ellison Smyth, Jr.



scribed, and we again set to work with the spades. I was dreadfully weary, but, scarcely understanding what had occasioned the change

gold of antique date and of great variety—French, Spanish, and German money, with a few English guineas, and some counters of which we had never seen specimens before.

let them there remain, as if enjoying the luxury of a bath. At length, with a deep sigh, he exclaimed, as if in a soliloquy,

"And dis all cum ob de goole bug! de putty



THE ADVANTAGES
OF COMING DOWN THE WRONG CHIMNEY.

ill-sustained by the gentlemen, who seemed each in the other's way, they rose and took their leave—Mr Bellaire lingering last, for he was a lover avowed

Original illustrations for *The Gold Bug*

Published with the text for Poe's $100 prize story in *The Philadelphia Dollar Newspaper* for Wednesday, June 28, 1843. The illustrations were by F. O. C. Darley, the Philadelphia artist retained by Poe to illustrate *The Stylus*, which never appeared

From a file of the Dollar Newspaper

Courtesy of the Maryland Historical Society

net, but some years later when visiting the same locality he managed to snare several by the pleasant and magic formula of anointing tree trunks in daytime with an alluring mixture of stale beer, rum, and brown sugar. Their fondness for sap it seems suggested his "sugaring for them" as moth collectors do. A specimen of the beetle itself, it appears, must be closely examined if its beauty is to be fully appreciated. A large specimen is about an inch and a half long and about a half an inch wide; they have black antennæ that sometimes measure over two inches in length, while the head and prominent prothorax are glittering with fiery gold sometimes shot with iridescent green. The fore-wings are satiny-green and, when opened, discover the full-gold of the abdomen beneath, so that old "Jupiter's" description of, "Solid goole inside and all sep hum wing," fixes it as Poe's very "gold bug," indeed.

But how about the skull markings? These, it appears, we do not have to go far to seek, as they are also forthcoming from a beetle very common to the locality of Fort Moultrie. Mr. Smyth, for such was the scientific gentleman's name, upon this same "sugaring expedition" was so fortunate as to capture upon the same tree, side by side with the golden *Callichroma,* one of the common big "Click Beetles" of the vicinity, which is known to bug men as *Alaus Oculatus* and to small boys as "The Jumping Jack." It is about the same size as the gold-beetle (*Callichroma*), but flatter and more oval. It has a background of black, thickly spotted with white, and its very large prothorax is provided with two oval, eye-like black spots edged with white that give it a decidedly piratical and skull-like appearance.[297]

Mr. Smyth was then visited, he said, by a "scientific revelation," and a moment of literary insight, in which he saw that Poe's gold bug was a composite, and that by placing *Alaus Oculatus, I,* the "skull-bug," on *Callichroma, II,* the gold bug, he had what the printer has so obligingly done for us here, Edgar Allan

297 The drawings of these insects have been made for the author (from specimens captured on Sullivan's Island within a few miles of Fort Moultrie) by Miss Elena von Feld of the American Museum of Natural History, New York City, specimens furnished by Miss Laura M. Bragg, Director of the Charleston Museum.

Poe's clever little synthesis, or "*Scarabœus Caput Hominis,*" Poe's gold bug.[298]

The description of the beetle which "Legrand" finally places in the hand of Poe is now complete:

> It was a beautiful *scarabœus,* and, at that time, . . . unknown to naturalists — of course a great prize in a scientific point of view. There were two round black spots near one extremity of the back and a long one near the other. The scales were exceedingly hard and glossy, with all the appearance of burnished gold. The weight of the insect was very remarkable. . . .

The weight was necessary if the insect was to be used as a plummet and a divining rod, as it was used in the story. The black marks at the rear, making cross-bones can, of course, be left to Poe's imagination, but it is all very typical of the young Poe, of his imaginative fancy, his preoccupation with semi-scientific observation, and his love of a good hoax.

There are many elements in *The Gold Bug,* indeed, which indicate Poe's insatiable curiosity, his live interest in many things. The long antennæ of the beetle, which when lowered through the eye of the skull, point to the treasure, imply a knowledge of the old legends of the divining rod. There is also an understood element of sympathetic magic, for the golden bug is attracted by the golden treasure, — like attracts like — and there is, last of all, the delightful poetic fancy that the very soil of the island, where pirates have buried their doubloons and jewels, bred an insect that partakes of the nature of the golden treasure and the fearsome markings of the "Jolly-Roger" itself.

Indeed, confirmation of this association of the ideas in the story with the pirate flag is unexpectedly forthcoming from the pen of Poe himself. In an 1845 edition of *The Raven and Tales* which he corrected for himself, Poe has inserted these paragraphs in his own hand with the evident intention of including them in a reprint of the text. These changes appear to have been overlooked or disregarded by Griswold, Poe's editor, and they

[298] Arrangement for the synthesis of *Callichroma* and *Alaus Oculatus* designed by Theodore Spicer-Simson, Esq. to conform with Poe's own description in *The Gold Bug.*

should now be added to all texts of *The Gold Bug* which is otherwise incomplete. The paragraphs show the hero of the story and "Legrand" talking —[299]

(*Hero*) I presume the fancy of the skull — and of letting fall a beetle through the skull's eye — was suggested to Kidd by the piratical flag. No doubt he felt a kind of poetical consistency in recovering his money through his *ominus insignium.*

(*Legrand*) Perhaps, still I cannot help thinking that common-sense had quite as much to do with the matter as poetical consistency. To be visible from the Devil's seat, it was necessary that the object, if small, should be *white;* and there is nothing like your human skull for retaining and even increasing its whiteness under exposure to all vicissitudes of weather.

In this bit of dialogue, the double attitude of "poetical consistency" and "common sense," which Poe constantly employed in his stories, is nicely stressed and the effect of pirate legends upon the plot definitely confirmed.

For the rest, the remaining elements of the story are part and parcel of romance. In the "high rugged country behind Sullivan's Island," Poe introduces some of the scenery of the Ragged Mountains into South Carolina, for the country back of the sea-islands is in reality excessively low and flat.[300] The tree, however, is true to life. In the huge tulip trees and live-oaks of the district,[301]

[299] These paragraphs added by Poe himself, are inserted in the present text of *The Gold Bug* immediately *before* the paragraph beginning, "but your grand eloquence . . ." etc., and are taken from Poe's own copy of *The Raven and Other Poems* by Edgar A. Poe. New York, Wiley and Putnam, 161 Broadway, 1845. 12 mo. and *Tales,* by Edgar A. Poe. New York, Wiley and Putnam, 1845. 12 mo. "The above two works are bound together, the first precedes. This was Poe's own copy, with many manuscripts, marginal corrections and additions, evidently intended as the basis for a new edition, afterward the property of R. W. Griswold, Poe's editor, with his autograph on a fly leaf. It was bequeathed by J. L. Graham to the Century Association of New York. Quotations here by the courtesy of the Librarian of the Century Association.

[300] Prof. Basil L. Gildersleeve in writing Prof. Harrison says . . . "I am old enough to remember what an excitement his *Gold Bug* created in Charleston when it first appeared, and how severely we boys criticised the inaccuracies in the description of Sullivan's Island." Harrison's Life and Letters of E. A. Poe, vol. I, page 315. Prof. Gildersleeve knew the failings of his home town. Even Poe could not improve on scenery that was "already perfect."

[301] On Fairfield Plantation on the Santee, some miles from Sullivan's Island. there is a live oak which requires thirteen persons to span it. Many other large trees abound.

covered with the funereal plumes of Spanish moss waving eerily like the canopy of a catafalque, who, but the young Poe, could help but seeing something charnel-like, or resist providing a grinning skull among the gloomy labyrinth of branches? Nor is the size of the tree exaggerated. There are many near Fort Moultrie, a little way inland, even more gigantic and incredible than the one introduced in the story itself. The two guardian skeletons buried with the treasure are part of pirate lore. Stevenson uses the same device in *Treasure Island,* and such, in reality, seems to have been the gruesome custom of the buccaneers. But nothing can exceed the skill with which every item of fact and fancy is combined in the story to lead the reader on and up to the climax of the finding of the treasure when " Jupiter " is digging under the great tree by the glimmer of a lantern, and the dog —

> leaping into the hole, tore up the mould frantically with his claws. In a few seconds he had uncovered a mass of human bones, forming two complete skeletons, intermingled with several buttons of metal, and what appeared to be the dust of decayed woolen. One or two strokes of a spade upturned the blade of a large Spanish knife, and, as we dug further, three or four pieces pieces of gold and silver coins came to light . . . , (then the iron bound box, with its heavy lid and two sliding bolts!) These we drew back trembling and panting with anxiety. In an instant a treasure of incalcuable value lay gleaming before us. As the rays of the lanterns fell flashing within the pit, there flashed upward a glow and a glare, from a confused heap of gold and of jewels, that absolutely dazzled one's eyes.

In other stories and poems there are to be found distinct traces of his visits to Charleston and the hinterland. The house of Usher, itself, may well be some old, crumbling, and cracked-walled colonial mansion found moldering in the Carolina woods, as it was left desolate by the hands of the marauding British, surrounded by its swamps and gloomy woods, its cypress-stained tarns, and its snake-haunted Indian moats. To see these, is instantly to be reminded of descriptions by Poe. The whole country about, in fact, was one peculiarly in sympathy with his more lonely and melancholy moods. The vault described at the end of *The Sleeper,* a poem written in its first form about 1831, recalls almost literally some of the great family tombs on the plantations about Charles-

ton, with the semi-feudal pomp that surrounds them.[302] And Poe saw this country, it must be remembered, before the devastations of war had laid low the glories of its old royal grants and baronies. As a disinherited son he must have envied, and as a Virginian sympathized with, its prodigally-generous plantation life.

The young soldier seems to have risen rapidly in the estimate of his officers. Doubtless his gentlemanly manners and appearance soon recommended him. With this and his education, he would, indeed, have stood out in sharp contrast to the average regular army recruit of the period. His attention to duty was strict and evidently satisfactory, for on May 1, 1828, we find him being appointed "artificer," [303] a title which does not necessarily carry any mechanical duties with it, but is merely the first rung in promotions carrying higher pay and leading to the higher non-commissioned grades. He had already served as company clerk and assistant in the commissariat department, and was evidently about headquarters where he attracted attention and gave satisfaction. The Colonel himself must have had his eye on him, for his rise through all the non-commissioned grades seems to have taken place between May and December, 1828, and on January 1, 1829, he was appointed regimental sergeant major at Fortress Monroe, Virginia.

Naturally enough, with added responsibility went the compensation of greater personal freedom. Poe would have had little difficulty in obtaining considerable leave, and there is evidence that he spent part of it in visits to the nearby city of Charleston. Here was a city with whose quaint streets and high-walled gardens he must have had considerable contact. The wanderings of a young soldier upon leave are not always without romance, and the unique and foreign aspect of the place could not have been lost upon him. Perhaps he knew that he had been there before, as a child-in-arms, with his even-then dying mother, in 1811,[304]

302 Typical of these is the family tomb at Middleton Gardens near Charleston.

303 One biographer is somewhat confused by Poe's being appointed an "artificer."

304 This is doubtful, however, as Poe knew almost nothing about his family until he lived among his relatives in Baltimore in 1829. See his mistake in regard to being Benedict Arnold's grandson, Chapter XII, page 248.

and so sat through some play given upon the stage of the theater where she had trod the boards in *The Wonder* seventeen years before. Mr. Placide, the manager of Mrs. Poe's company, had been succeeded in Charleston by his son, and it is by no means impossible that Poe, who was on the hunt for information about his parents, may have looked him up.

At any rate, certain passages in the *Oblong Box* show that he was familiar with the departure of the Charleston sailing packets and the life along the docks, and he may have visited the " Old State House " (the rooms of the Charleston Library Society were located in the same building) and turned over some of the colonial records in the Probate Court relating to pirates and shipwreck, material which seems to have affected *The Gold Bug*.[305]

For the rest, oblivion has it in its quiet keeping. The officers of Poe's regiment died before they could be questioned as to the details of his life at Charleston, and almost nothing but the official records are left. Here is a whole year whose social and whose human contacts are nearly blank. Of its dreams we know more, for *Al Aaraaf* is the monument.

This is the longest poem that Poe wrote. Its story-plot and general architecture are negligible, although the conception is poetic. Into it the young poet poured, during the lonely hours at Fort Moultrie, a wealth of imagination, lovely sound, and airy fancy that entitle the work, for such it is, to a higher consideration than it has ever received. It has inspired other young poets to first take flight, and it remained for years a poetical bank upon which he continued to draw. Despite its frequent echoes, no one in America up to that time had ever written so many magic lines. Poe's dreams of the region between earth and paradise, however, were rudely interrupted by the place from which interruptions so often come — home.[306]

His hardship after leaving the house of John Allan, and the opportunity for considerable contemplation which the stay at

[305] In 1745, the ship " Cid Compeador," commanded by one Julian de Vego, was wrecked off the coast of South Carolina. Some of the affidavits preserved in the *Probate Court Records* at Charleston when compared with *The Gold Bug* suggest that Poe may have seen them (sic).

[306] See note 350, Chapter XII, referring to *Al Aaraaf*.

Fort Moultrie afforded, seems to have confirmed Poe in his ambitions for a literary career. He felt, he says, that the prime of his life was passing, yet three years of his five year term of enlistment remained to be served, with no prospects but barrack life beyond that. Sometime during the close of the year 1828 [307] he seems to have gotten into communication with his foster-father, either by letter or through the good offices of friends, and expressed a desire to obtain his guardian's help in leaving the army. Mr. Allan's permission it seems was required, for Poe's company commander, Lieutenant J. Howard, had become much interested in the brilliant young soldier and had promised to discharge him, if a reconciliation between John Allan and Poe could be confirmed. The communications between Richmond and Fort Moultrie were made through the medium of a Mr. John O. Lay who seems to have been a friend of the Allan family.[308]

Although aware now of the whereabouts of his foster-son, John Allan did not write him directly, but wrote Mr. Lay that he thought a military life was a good one for Poe, and evidently indicated that he was quite content to allow him to remain where he was. Nothing is more indicative of John Allan's utter coldness of heart than this. The letter was inclosed by Mr. Lay to Lieutenant Howard, and must have brought a sinking sense of disappointment to the home-sick and ambitious young soldier. For the time being, his hopes were dashed to the ground and doubt cast upon all his statements to Lieutenant Howard.

With the resumption of intercourse between father and son, a new factor begins to creep into John Allan's attitude to " the son of actors " — snobbishness. After inheriting his uncle's ample fortune, the older man developed social aspirations in conformity with the large mansion in Richmond, and these, it would appear, he felt were somewhat threatened by the fact that his " son " had enlisted as a private soldier. The descendant of Scotch smugglers, to judge from expressions in the correspondence which took place, felt that to have Poe return in the uniform of anything less than

[307] The facts related here which conflict with certain " standard " biographies come from the new published letters of the Valentine Museum, Richmond. See particularly letter 6, page 75.

[308] Some authorities say, " a relative of Mrs. Allan."

an officer would be to have entailed upon him a portion of Poe's "infamy"; nevertheless, he feels a military career is the thing for Poe. "He had better remain where he is until the end of his enlistment."

In a letter written by Poe to John Allan from Fort Moultrie on December 1, 1828, Poe protests against this, tells of his concern at learning that John Allan had been ill, and speaks with pardonable pride of his own satisfaction at his rapid promotion. He stresses his determination to leave the army unless absolutely forbidden to do so by his "father," and states that army regulations do not permit of promotion from the ranks, and that his age precludes West Point. It is now that the first mention of West Point occurs.

This letter shows Poe's character to have considerably hardened during his army career. His promotions seem to have given him self-confidence and poise, and he says that he is no longer a wayward boy but a man with a work to do in the world. His future greatness he successfully predicts, for "he feels that within him" which will make him fulfil John Allan's wishes, and he excuses his self-confidence by saying that conviction of success is the only thing that can make ambitions and talent prosper. "I have thrown myself on the world like the Norman conqueror on the shores of Britain and, by my avowed assurance of victory, have destroyed the fleet which could alone cover my retreat — I must either conquer or die — succeed or be disgraced." Poe makes plain that he is not asking for money — a letter to Lieutenant Howard assuring that officer of the reconciliation that would procure his release is all he asks — and — "my dearest love to Ma — it is only when absent that we can tell the value of such a friend" — yours respectfully and affectionately.

This cry from the high heart of ambitious and fiery youth in the agony of frustration, and the prison-house of military barracks received as a reply a complete silence. In the arctic labyrinth of John Allan's brain it was locked away as utterly and securely as some pathetic secret in a vault of cold marble.

One ponders wearily such facts, startled by the amazing possibilities of human nature, wondering a little about the wet eyes

of the fragile, failing wife in the great house at Richmond, of what her husband thought when he found his prediction about the boy's starving in the streets had not been fulfilled — not completely that is — whether he was glad or sorry, annoyed, or simply surprised. Was there not some sorrow and yearning left in the man — or was he, after all, this strong prophet of lean years, who saw to it that his predictions were fulfilled — disappointed? Who knows — even Fate must have been astonished — John Allan had raised a poet!

In the meantime, Edgar Poe had sailed northward.[309] On December the first, he writes that his regiment was under orders to sail for Old Point Comfort. The low coasts of Carolina faded away forever under the eyes of " Edgar A. Perry," First United States Artillery; the army transport lumbered heavily up the coast with the warm current of the Gulf Stream; the hours passed slowly while the men played cards in their bunks under the light of whale-oil lanterns. Fortress Monroe drew slowly nearer. Certainly a letter would be there to release him from all this! Only a few lines would do the trick — would save three years of youth from being wasted. Even " Pa " would not fail him there. What had he done anyway to be thought so " degraded " ? Played cards for money and read novels, drunk a little heady peach-and-honey, insisted upon being a poet. For that he had done penance in uniform and barracks for two long, lost years. Surely that was enough! It was getting near Christmas time. Perhaps, they would let him come home? *Home!* — he could anticipate old black " Dab " crying out over him as he opened the big door; " Ma " coming weakly down the steps half blind with joy, " Aunty Nancy's " hearty rapture, even John Allan's amused ironical smile

309 Poe's regiment almost certainly left Fort Moultrie the first week in December, 1828, for on the first of December he writes John Allan that they are then under orders to sail and that mail must be sent to him at Fortress Monroe. See letter 6, *The Valentine Museum Letters*. Poe, therefore, spent the time between the middle of November, 1827, and the first week in December, 1828, on Sullivan's Island, South Carolina. A considerable slice out of his short life. The statement that Poe left Fort Moultrie in October, 1828, (Woodberry, etc.) is thus corrected and the remaining months accounted for. The voyage to Hampton Roads could not have been under four days in length. This was Poe's last " long " voyage by sea.

and, " Weel, weel, my ain proud cockerel, fluttered back, eh! " Then the glow of the agate lamp in his own quiet room and the books. . . . The ship, whose name has been forgotten, lurched another wave-length northward. To Israfel it seemed to be making no perceptible progress. He was already a little, just a little weary of another voyage which was now half over. Within a few weeks of reaching Fortress Monroe he was twenty years old. *Tamerlane* had probably been destroyed in Boston, almost the whole edition. There had not been even a flash in the pan.

CHAPTER XII
Cold Marble

POE'S regiment would have been completely disembarked and in quarters at Fortress Monroe, Virginia, before the middle of December, 1828. By the transfer from Fort Moultrie, only the scene of his monotony had been shifted. Old Point Comfort at that time was scarcely a village. What little gaiety it offered centered largely about a hotel where the officers occasionally held dances, sometimes attended by ladies from Washington, Baltimore, or Richmond. For the enlisted men, the fort, cut off by water as it was, could have offered almost nothing, beyond the squabbles of the married quarters, to relieve the tedium of artillery practice and guard duty. Poe seems to have made friends with the non-commissioned officers of his old company; he specifically mentions Sergeants Benton, Griffith, and Hooper in a letter written later to Sergeant Graves, more familiarly known as "Bully," whose wife, and one "Duke" are also included in his salutations.[310] Occasional leave to Norfolk, nearby, was probably the most abandoned form of entertainment known to the post.

It is no wonder, then, that the young soldier with *Al Aaraaf* in his pocket, and *Tamerlane* completely revised and ready for print, under the urge of literary ambition, became impatient and felt that the prime of his life was being wasted. Three more years of military office routine would be fatal. He had already written Mr. Allan from Fort Moultrie that it was now high time that he should leave the army. To find no letter awaiting him at Fortress Monroe, filled him with a growing despair as day after day slipped by and the silence in Richmond continued. A week or so after arriving at Fortress Monroe, Poe again wrote his

[310] Poe to Sergeant Samuel Graves from Richmond, May 3, 1830, *Valentine Museum Letters*, No. 21.

guardian expressing his sorrow at not hearing from him, and his fixed determination to leave the service.[311]

This letter is remarkable. It shows how thoroughly Poe's personality had become integrated by his army experience, and throws a vivid emphasis upon his literary aspirations. Despite the fact, says Poe, that his ambition has not taken the direction which his guardian desired, he is determined to follow his own bent. Richmond and the United States are all too narrow a sphere for him, and the world will be his theater. As for the army, he wishes to be gone. The undoubted conviction of genius rests heavily upon him. The letter is one of the most prophetic. In it he emphatically, but with great dignity, denies the imputation that he is degraded. *I have in my heart what has no connection with degradation and can walk amidst infection and be uncontaminated,* is a close paraphase of his words. How heavily the sights and sounds of barrack life, the crassness, the coarseness, the association with those who were personally repulsive, together with the utter lack of all touch with the subleties of another world in which he lived — how heavily these weighed upon him, leaps forth at us from the fevered writing on the yellowed page. If John Allan is determined to abandon him, Poe warns him, although neglected, he will be doubly ambitious, and the world will undoubtedly hear of the son whom the older man thought beneath his notice. With this letter the relations of " father " and " son " begin to enter upon their final phase.

Lieutenant Howard, Poe tells us, had already introduced him to Colonel James House who had known " General " David Poe, the poet's grandfather. The Colonel and the other officers all felt that Poe might be gotten into West Point, despite his age, if John Allan will only aid him . . . etc., etc., but to this there was no reply. John Allan was probably too much absorbed in the important affairs of the world of reality to be moved by the prayers of a " son " whose avowed ambition was to be a poet. Whether he conveyed Poe's oft-repeated messages of affection to his " dear

[311] Poe to John Allan from Fortress Monroe, December 22, 1828, *Valentine Museum Letters,* No. 27. Poe indicates in this letter that unless he receives help, he contemplates going abroad, probably to London (sic).

Ma " is not known. At least he payed no attention to her constant appeals to be allowed to see her " dear boy," now only a few miles away from Richmond. And this plea was refused with a more than Spartan fortitude on the part of her husband, for Frances Allan was dying. In the big house at Richmond, the long physical and spiritual agony of the childless woman was about to receive its final anodyne. Worry over her mortal illness might be accepted as a sufficient reason for John Allan's disregard of his troublesome " son," if it was not definitely known that it was the constant prayer of his fast sinking wife that she might be allowed to see " Eddie " [312] before she died.

Shortly after Poe's arrival at Fortress Monroe, his own assertions as to the good opinion in which he was held by his officers were confirmed by his promotion to the highest rank which an enlisted man can attain, short of a commission. We have already seen that Lieutenant Howard had introduced the young soldier to the Colonel of the Regiment. This, and the fact that he had long been employed upon military clerical work by his other officers, apparently to their complete satisfaction, probably procured his final promotion. A few days after disembarking at Old Point Comfort, probably about December 20, 1828, Poe was detailed to Regimental Headquarters.

" Private Perry's " performance of duty at regimental headquarters was evidently eminently satisfactory, for ten days later, on January 1, 1829, he was appointed regimental sergeant major and is so carried on the morning report of the day following.

Poe's appointment to be regimental sergeant major is undoubtedly a compliment to his trustworthiness and executive ability. The entire correspondence of a command passes through the hands of that non-commissioned officer. He is often in a position to cause serious trouble even for commissioned officers, and must perforce, possess the confidence and trust of the regimental staff. The regiment, of which Poe was the senior enlisted member

[312] Testimony of James Galt which Mr. J. H. Whitty prints in his *Memoir:* This is to the effect that Mrs. Allan's dying desire was to hold Poe in her arms before she died. In case she passed away before Edgar arrived home, she asked not to be buried until her foster-son should see her. The Galts, it will be remembered, were cousins of John Allan.

at Fortress Monroe in January, 1829, was a composite one, being composed of companies detailed from various commands to make up an "artillery practice school;" a use to which the old fort has frequently been put. Among the officers present at that time, was one Lieutenant Joseph Locke with whom Poe came in touch, not altogether affably, later on at West Point. The fact that he had reached the top of the ladder as a private soldier, with peculiar opportunities to learn the mystery of artillery, undoubtedly helped him greatly in obtaining letters to the War Department.

Sometime during January, 1829, Poe was ill in the military hospital at Fortress Monroe where he was attended by the Post Surgeon, a Dr. Robert Archer, with close relatives in Richmond.[313] The young soldier seems to have been prostrated by some sort of fever. No doubt his uneasiness and anxiety was a contributing cause. Dr. Archer was greatly attracted by the brilliant young soldier whose manners were so evidently that of a gentleman. After some little time, Poe confessed to the surgeon, who seemed to be his friend, that he was the "son" of John Allan of Richmond and serving in the army under an *alias*. Dr. Archer, who must have known Poe's story through his Richmond connections, interested himself in the young man's behalf. It may have been in this way that Frances Allan first heard that her foster-son was at Fortress Monroe.

By this time Poe was thoroughly aware of the fact that his guardian would not help him to a discharge, with a literary career in view. The West Point idea seems to have been the only form of compromise, so letters were again written to John Allan suggesting aid in procuring a substitute, and his influence for a cadet's appointment. Dr. Archer enlisted the aid and aroused the interest of the officers. What, if anything, was Mr. Allan's reply

[313] Dr. Archer was an uncle of Mrs. Susan Archer Weiss, one of Poe's minor biographers. Under the circumstances of this close relationship I have followed *her* account of Poe's contact with this army surgeon which is somewhat more complete and convincing, in this particular, than Prof. Woodberry's. It is now certain, from letters unknown to either Prof. Woodberry or Mrs. Weiss, that Dr. Archer did *not* suggest to Poe the West Point scheme which he (Poe) had already conceived at Fort Moultrie some months before. Dr. Archer was appointed to the United States Medical Corps, August 5, 1826, and stationed at Fortress Monroe, *National Calendar*, vol. IV, page 158.

is not known. The first direct message from Richmond which Poe received from his guardian was a summons to the death bed of "mother."

Frances Allan's frantic requests had at last prevailed. Realizing that she was indeed in her last agony, even the cold marble seems to have been touched. But it was too late. On Saturday February 28, 1829, Sergeant-Major "Edgar A. Perry" is carried as present on the muster roll of his regiment, and on the same day, a few miles away in Richmond, Mrs. Allan died.[314] Knowing full well the mettle of the man with whom she was having her last dealings, with her dying breath she extorted from him a solemn promise that he would not abandon Poe.[315] It was her last wish that she might not be buried until he saw her. It is impossible to contemplate this gentle woman, waiting in vain for the beloved and eagerly expected footstep of her "dear boy," while the darkness closed in upon her; or the stern heart that sat beside her, only melting at the last, without a solemn wonder at the different capabilities of human nature. With her had departed the sweetest and truest friend that a certain poet ever knew. "If only *she* hadn't died," said Poe afterward.

On the afternoon of Sunday March 1, 1829, by far the most conspicious passenger on the Norfolk stage bound for Richmond must have been a young sergeant major in the uniform of the First Artillery, with a hospital pallor under his sunburn, and obviously nervous and excited by every delay. Frances Allan had died on the morning of the twenty-eighth of February, she must had been sinking for two days before, yet it was only at the last that she had prevailed on her husband to send for Poe. Some hours would have been consumed in getting a leave granted, if the mes-

[314] *Richmond Whig,* Monday, March 2, 1829. "Died on Saturday morning last, after a lingering and painful illness, Mrs. Frances K. Allan, consort of Mr. John Allan, aged 47 years. The friends and acquaintances of the family are respectfully invited to attend the funeral from the late residence on this day at 12 o'clock." Clipping by courtesy of Edward V. Valentine, Esq.

[315] Mrs. Allan had a small income of her own from certain parcels of real estate which, it appears from transactions of assignment in 1822, were held in her name. It may be that she suggested to her husband that some of the proceeds from this property might be devoted to Poe. There is no direct evidence that she did so, however.

sage was received the next day, and Poe could hardly have started till the afternoon of March 1.[316] While he was engaged in making the journey between Fortress Monroe and Richmond, Mrs. Allan was being buried. Perhaps there were good reasons for this; in any event, her last request was not carried out.

The return of a young soldier to his home town after an absence of two years, cannot fail to awaken in him a flood of memories. One can imagine Poe's impatience at the stages where the negro horse boys slowly unhitched and hitched the relays of horses, and the thousand recollections that thronged upon him as, towards the close of a gloomy March evening,[317] the conveyance rattled, all too slowly, into the dimly lit streets of Richmond. Once arrived, he must have dashed up Main Street to the corner of Fifth, through the gate leading into the circular drive before the familiar house, and run with all his might up the steps. The crêpe was not there, perhaps he was not too late after all? A hundred things that he had been saving up to say to his "mother" for the past two years crowded to his lips. The door swung open, and in a few instants he knew that it was all over.

The scene of Poe's tragic home-coming was said to have been so harrowing as to be unbearable to those who witnessed it. Frances Allan had been greatly loved by her whole household, the demonstrative negro servants were in tears. Miss Valentine, inconsolable and worn out by her long vigil by the bedside, could not have met Poe with much fortitude. Even John Allan was profoundly moved; he stayed away from the office next day, and he was so agitated as to misdate a document. Be it set down to his credit that it was an order for some mourning clothes for Poe.[318]

[316] In his letter to John Allan from Fortress Monroe of March 10, 1829, Poe showed that the journey from Richmond to Norfolk took a day and a night. As he arrived home "the evening after the funeral," March 2, he must have left Old Point Comfort sometime the day before, probably on the afternoon stage unless he went by water. The latter method was slower, and therefore probably not employed in this race with death.

[317] It must be remembered that in Poe's day the term "evening" meant any time after three o'clock P.M. until darkness. In some parts of the South the word is still used that way by the older generation.

[318] *Ellis & Allan Papers* — "Mr. Ellis, please to furnish Edgar A. Poe with a suit of clothes, 3 pairs of socks or thread hose. McCrery will make them. Also a pair of suspenders, and hat and knife, pair of gloves." This is in the handwriting

The dying whispers of his wife not to forget "her dear boy Edgar" were too near a thing for him to utterly disregard, and a flood of old tender memories of the dead woman in front of the fire, with the boy upon her knee, many and many an evening, must have revived in him some of the old affection.

Soon after his return, probably the next day, Poe visited Shockoe cemetery where Mrs. Allan had been buried. The empty room had been bad enough; close to the actual presence of death in the graveyard, now for the second time, Poe must have sounded the last fathom of despair. The future author of the *Conqueror Worm* and the philosophy of *Eureka* could not have been, even at that time, under any comforting illusions about the hereafter of death. On the way to the new grave they passed the tomb of Mrs. Stanard, just to the left of the road, a combination of sorrow that in Poe's state must have been well-nigh unbearable. It seems to have been so, for he is said to have cast himself down exhausted by the last resting place of Frances Allan. The servants remembered helping him into the carriage which bore him away.

Perhaps it may have occurred to his "strong-minded guardian," while his wife was being buried and his "son's" heart had almost stopped beating at her grave, that there were a good many things in heaven and *earth* that had hitherto not been thought of in his philosophy. The wife, who had, at least, been allowed to share his bosom, later received a "fitting marble monument." Even in that, however, she was not alone. For the time being, though, John Allan was shaken. It was some weeks before another piece of marble that had originally been quarried in Scotland resumed its normal mean temperature.

Of the details of this Richmond visit in the Winter of 1829, not very much is known. Poe probably saw most of his old friends who were not away at the University. The Galts seem also to have been most kind, and the young sergeant major undoubtedly visited his sister Rosalie at the Mackenzies'. Probably the most important of his visits was at the Roysters'. Poe is said to have

of John Allan, but dated March 3, *1828*, probably due to Mr. Allan's troubled state of mind at his wife's death, as the slip belongs in the records of 1829. Poe was not in Richmond in 1828.

called upon the parents of his sweetheart and to have created a scene when he learned that during his absence Elmira had been married to Mr. Shelton. This was contrary to the assurances he had received from them upon his return from the University in 1827.[319] The young poet undoubtedly felt that both he and Elmira had been tricked, and every advantage taken of his absence to influence her. He is said to have reproached Mr. and Mrs. Royster bitterly, and to have demanded an interview with Elmira. This, of course, was refused, and Mr. Shelton was warned. It appears that one of Poe's letters to Elmira from the University had fallen into her hands after her marriage, and that as a consequence she had made things unpleasant for her husband and parents. The marriage was a fact, however; Poe had lost his "Lenore," and this grief was added to his already overwhelming sorrow over the death of Mrs. Allan. From later developments, it is known that he was by no means satisfied as to the state of Elmira's feelings, and there can be no doubt that he cherished her memory, was haunted by dreams of her as long as he lived, and felt determined to have an interview at the first opportunity. This, however, did not occur while he was in Richmond in 1829. No doubt there were precautions taken to prevent it.

Poe's leave of absence was the usual ten day furlough granted for such emergencies in the army. During the few days that he was in Richmond, the West Point scheme was talked over with John Allan, who was probably willing to listen to it because it seemed to offer a final solution as to his ward's future and definitely removed him from the household.[320] A complete reconciliation was impossible under the circumstances, but a more amicable feeling undoubtedly existed between them when Poe left for Fortress Monroe, than had been the case for a long time.

The young soldier left Richmond early on the morning of the

[319] The Roysters had talked to Poe after his return from the University and it had been agreed to defer the marriage for a year. At any rate, Elmira then married Mr. Shelton while Poe was away and *not* just before his return from the University, as several biographers aver.

[320] Definite moves to obtain letters of influence to the War Department for a cadet's appointment all follow this time, and Poe's proceedings to get clear of the army from the time of this visit shows that the understanding with his guardian was reached at this time, and not before by previous correspondence.

ninth of March, 1829. He went to his "father's" room to bid him good-bye, but finding him asleep, he did not awaken him to the consciousness of grief. Immediately on arriving at Old Point Comfort, on the morning of the tenth, he wrote back home.[321] He says he is well, and there is a note of joy in the letter at the reconciliation with his guardian, for he tells us, that if it were not for Mrs. Allan's death, he would now be happier than he has been for a long time. The rest of the letter is given up to saying how anxious he is to retrieve his good name and reëstablish himself in the good opinion of his guardian, and to suggestions as to those who might aid in obtaining an appointment to West Point, now taken for granted. Evidently, during the visit home, the matter had been talked over, and John Allan's consent obtained.

From many indications, it is certain that, from the first, the whole West Point plan was on Poe's part, merely a concession to his guardian's idea of what his future career should be. The young soldier himself would have liked to free himself entirely from the army to give himself up to writing. On this point, however, as upon his "son's" returning to Charlottesville, John Allan was adamant. Poe was himself a little wiser now. He had learned how futile it was to woo the muse with no bread in his stomach, and no oil in the lamp; and he was prepared to compromise, rather than to walk out of the house again to starve. Frances Allan's promise, that she had extorted from her husband, had paved the way for a reconciliation. With temporary acquiescence to his guardian's wishes, and a repetition at West Point of his success in the ranks, Poe felt that there was a real hope of being reënstated in Mr. Allan's good opinion if not in his affection. In the meantime, the Military Academy offered board, bed and education; a specious combination that has appealed to a great many poor but ambitious youths. To share, even partially, in John Allan's large fortune was also highly desirable. Even a modest legacy would bring Poe the possibility of the leisure for his writing which he so much desired — desired, indeed, above all things — and relief from the haunting fear of poverty. This choice there-

321 Poe to John Allan, March 10, 1829. Letter No. 9, *Valentine Museum Collection.*

fore, which circumstances had so largely thrust upon him, was the lesser horn of a dilemma rather than a thirst for the glory of arms. The result of it was to be the almost utter waste of two years out of a short life.

From the standpoint of literature, it is unfortunate that John Allan could not change his mind. A little concession, on his part, to the darling wish of his " son's " heart would have allowed the world to have heard from Poe oftener and sooner. It might have saved him, even then, from the nerve-shattering effects of the poverty and deprivations to follow. But to the potentialities of his ward, John Allan was blind. West Point, to the good merchant, seemed an ideal solution. Edgar would there be under that discipline of which the Scotchman felt he was in such need; it relieved Mr. Allan of personal expense by casting him on the public charge; and it removed Poe from the household and assured him a future. By such an arrangement the older man could at once assoil himself of his promise to his dead wife, and be honorably rid of the young genius who had become a spiritual, an intellectual, and a physical nuisance. There comes a time in every man's life when he feels that he is entitled to what he calls " peace." Death had removed John Allan's wife. He was now looking forward to a new era of existence, and in the scheme of that life there was no place for a reminder, a painful reminder, of the old order of things.

No one can blame Mr. Allan for this. A lack of psychic insight and artistic prevision, however desirable, must be forgiven — a man cannot be reproached for the lack of qualities with which he has not been endowed — but there was something more than this. When John Allan " adopted " the helpless child whom he took into his house, whether willingly or not, he assumed certain responsibilities. It is the ruthlessness of his shaking these off, from the time of Poe's sojourn at Charlottesville until after the West Point interlude, of which posterity has a right to complain. The dying prayers of his wife seemed to temporarily arouse in him a sense of the fact that fatherhood does not consist simply in cramming a child's stomach, and then throwing it out of the nest. As the days slipped by, however, the repugnance to having Poe

in the house returned, and the memory of the promise waned. It is this process that the correspondence between the years 1829 and 1833 shadows forth. The beginning, as might be expected, was more favorable than the end.

Most of Poe's time when he got back to the Fort was taken up in making arrangements for his discharge, getting letters from his officers to the War Department, and finding a substitute willing to serve out the remainder of his enlistment, about three years. A few weeks after his arrival, arrangements were complete, and the Colonel of the Regiment wrote the following letter to the General commanding the Department of the East. As usual in Poe's case, most of the biographical data is inexact. The story which Poe told his commanding officer can be read between the lines.

Fortress Monroe,
March 30, '29.

GENERAL, — I request your permission to discharge from the service Edgar A. Perry,[322] at present the Sergeant-Major of the 1st Reg't of Artillery, on his procuring a substitute.

The said Perry is one of a family of orphans whose unfortunate parents were the victims of the conflagration of the Richmond Theatre in 1809.[323] The subject of this letter was taken under the protection of a Mr. Allan, a gentleman of wealth and respectability, of that city, who, as I understand, adopted his protegé as his son and heir; with the intention of giving him a liberal education, he had placed him at the University of Virginia from which, after considerable progress in his studies, in a moment of youthful indiscretion he absconded,[324] and was not heard from by his Patron for several years; in the meantime he became reduced to the necessity of enlisting into the service,[325] and accordingly entered as a soldier in my Regiment, at Fort Independence,

322 The request for discharge of course had to be in the same name as that under which the soldier was enlisted.

323 The Colonel evidently had the story from Poe and from John Allan's letter to him, but he is somewhat mixed as to dates and precise facts. The theater burned in 1811. That Poe used it as a convenient method of explaining his adoption seems likely. It is also a more romantic reason, the kind that Poe liked to fill into his "autobiography."

324 The use of the word "absconded," carrying with it the idea of financial defaulting, may indicate that, in his letter to the Colonel, John Allan made mention of Poe's running away on account of debts.

325 "Reduced to the necessity," etc. — this is an interesting comment on the Colonel's own opinion of the enlisted personnel of that day, and Poe's desperate straits in Boston in 1827. Evidently "enlisting" was one step short of suicide.

in 1827. Since the arrival of his company at this place he has made his situation known to his Patron, at whose request the young man has been permitted to visit him; the result, is an entire reconciliation on the part of Mr. Allan, who reinstates him into his family and favor, and who in a letter I have received from him requests that his son may be discharged on procuring a substitute, an experienced soldier and approved sergeant is ready to take the place of Perry as soon as his discharge can be obtained.[326] The good of the service, therefore, cannot be materially injured by the discharge.

I have the honor to be,

With great respect, your obedient servant,

JAS. HOUSE,

Col. 1st Art'y.

To the General Commanding the
E. Dept. U. S. A., New York.

Permission was granted by General E. P. Gaines commanding the Eastern Department, from New York headquarters in an order dated April 4, and in compliance with this, "Edgar A. Perry" was discharged from the service of the United States on April 15, 1829, a sergeant — as the Colonel notes — then being ready to take his place as substitute. As this transaction was later used as the basis of a serious charge against Poe by the second Mrs. Allan, it is important to note that Poe was discharged from the army in a little over a month from the time that he returned from furlough to Richmond. Apparently, the whole matter was easily arranged. Allowing for the time which the mail then required between New York and Fortress Monroe,[327] and for the usual delays of official correspondence, it is hard to see how it could have been done more speedily.

Poe's own description of the transactions involved in his dis-

[326] The wording here strongly suggests that the approved sergeant was ready to fill the post of sergeant-major to which he would at the same time have to be promoted by regimental order. The point should be noted.

[327] Then at least three or four days each way. The orders would also be a day or so in being approved, written, and transmitted. It evidently took the Colonel's letter three days to get to New York and the confirming order at headquarters was issued on the fourth. The order for discharge is dated ahead to the fifteenth of April because it allows a month's half pay and is convenient to compute. This completely does away with the second Mrs. Allan's story of delay during which the aggrieved substitute "grew tired waiting and wrote to Mr. Allan."

charge is now available.[328] On the date of his discharge it appears that both Colonel House and Lieutenant Howard, his regimental, and company commanders were absent. Had they been present, either one, it would have been possible to have mustered in the first recruit who offered as a substitute, which would have cost Poe only the usual bounty of $12. Poe had told John Allan that it would only cost that much, when he was in Richmond, it appears. With the officers absent who were competent to enlist a *new* recruit in his place, Poe was forced to pay $75 to the sergeant who took his place. This he did by giving the substitute $25 cash and a note for $50, which he afterwards took up out of $100 sent him from home. As Poe's explanation agrees with the army regulations in force at the time, both John Allan's suspicions, and the charge of embezzlement made against Poe by the second Mrs. Allan in her only known printed statement about him, published long after his death, are both shown to be wrong.

Years after the events just described, when every move of Poe had become a matter of public interest, the second Mrs. Allan, then a widow, wrote to Colonel Thomas H. Ellis at that time living in Baltimore, an "explanation" of the estrangement between Edgar Poe and John Allan. The letter is quoted in part:

> Mr. Poe had not lived under Mr. Allan's roof for two years before my marriage, and no one knew his whereabouts; his letters were very scarce and were dated from St. Petersburg, Russia, although he had enlisted in the army at Boston. After he became tired of army life, he wrote to his benefactor, expressing a desire to have a substitute if the money could be sent to him. Mr. Allan sent it, Poe spent it; and after the substitute was tired out, waiting and getting letters and excuses, he (the substitute) enclosed one of Poe's letters to Mr. Allan, which was too black to be credited if it had not contained the author's signature. Mr. Allan sent the money to the man, and banished Poe from his affections; and he never lived here again.[329]

An examination of the statements in this letter, together with

[328] From various letters from Poe in the *Valentine Museum Collection* dated from Baltimore in the Summer of 1829, written to John Allan in Richmond.

[329] This letter was afterward published by Colonel Thomas H. Ellis, the son of Charles Ellis, in the *Richmond Standard* for April 22, 1880. Louise Allan Mayo also gave further publicity to this unfortunate epistle in *Historic Homes of Richmond.* The *Richmond News, Illustrated Saturday Magazine,* July 28, 1900.

the known facts and movements of Poe and John Allan, and other letters dealing with the young poet's period of army service and discharge, prove that Mrs. Allan's letter is incorrect, not only in its charge of the misuse of funds, but in nearly every other item. Poe did, it is now known, still owe money to some of the non-commissioned officers in his regiment when he left Fortress Monroe. A letter of Poe's written to one of these men later on fell into the second Mrs. Allan's hands. This, together with her husband's suspicions, and the nature of Poe's statements about his guardian in the epistle itself, perhaps led Mrs. Allan to make the statement that she did make.

The absence of Lieutenant Howard, on the date of Poe's discharge, April 15, probably accounts for the fact that Poe did not, although anxious to secure his cadet appointment, leave Fortress Monroe until almost a week after his release. He was waiting to obtain letters from Lieutenant Howard and the other officers to aid him in his application. These letters were given gladly, and show clearly the high estimation in which Poe was held by his superiors. The blamelessness of his conduct during his two years in the army is clear. His company and battalion commanders write:

Fortress Monroe, Va. 20th April, 1829.

Edgar Poe, late Sergt-Major in the 1st Arty, served under my command in "H," company 1st Reg't of Artillery, from June 1827, to January 1829, during which time his conduct was unexceptionable. He at once performed the duties of clerk and assistant in the Subsistent Department, both of which duties were promptly and faithfully done. His habits are good and entirely free from drinking.

J. Howard,
Lieut. 1st Artillery

In addition to the above, I have to say that Edgar Poe (erased Perry) was appointed Sergeant-Major of the 1st art'y; on the 1st of January, 1829, and up to this date, has been exemplary in his department, prompt and faithful in the discharge of his duties — and is highly worthy of confidence.

H. W. Griswold,
Bt. Capt. and Adjut. 1st. Art'y

To this is a third endorsement by the Lieutenant Colonel of the

regiment, W. J. Worth,[330] who joins most heartily adding some further praise of his own. The letter, in short, covers the entire period of Poe's service in the army under all three officers.

With these letters in his pocket, young Poe left Old Point Comfort and set out for Richmond where he seems to have been occupied during the latter part of April, 1829, and the first week of May in obtaining political influence for his appointment. John Allan bestirred himself in the matter and obtained a letter from Andrew Stevenson, the Speaker of the House, and a Major John Campbell, who remembered having seen Edgar Poe as a boy at "The Springs" in 1812.[331] While Poe was still in Richmond, Colonel Worth, the Representative in Congress from the district, was also prevailed upon to write the Secretary of War in the young man's behalf, and to these letters and the eulogies of Poe's former officers, John Allan added his own. Pen in hand, the nature of the older man's feelings toward his ward, could not be forced beyond the following arctic "recommendation":

Richmond, May 6, 1829.

Dr. Sir, — The youth who presents this, is the same alluded to by Lt. Howard, Capt. Griswold, Colo. Worth, our representative, and the speaker, Hon'ble Andrew Stevenson, and my friend Major Jno. Campbell.

He left me in consequence of some gambling at the University at Charlottesville, because (I presume) I refused to sanction a rule that the shop-keepers and others had adopted there, making Debts of Honour of all indiscretions. I have much pleasure in asserting that he stood his examination at the close of the year with great credit to himself. His history is short. He is the grandson of Quartermaster-General Poe, of Maryland, whose widow as I understand still receives a pension for the services or disabilities of her husband. Frankly, sir, do I declare that he is no relation to me whatever; that I have many whom I have taken an active interest to promote theirs,[332] with no other feeling than that, every man is my care, if he be in distress. For myself I ask nothing, but I do request your kindness to aid this youth in the promotion of his future prospects. And it will afford me great pleasure

[330] The endorsement of this letter by the Lieutenant Colonel of the Regiment shows that the Colonel *was* absent as Poe states.

[331] See Chapter III, page 45.

[332] This may refer to the "children," probably not to anyone in Scotland as William Galt had cared for them in his will.

to reciprocate any kindness you can show him. Pardon my frankness; but I address a soldier.[333]

Your Ob'd't se'v't,
JOHN ALLAN

The Hon'ble John H. Eaton, Sec'y of War, Washington City.

With this gloomy document from the frank altruist who felt that "every man is my care, if he be in distress —" to fire the enthusiasm of the Secretary of War in his behalf, Poe left Richmond on or about May 7, 1829, and went to Washington to present the letters to the Secretary of War in person.

John Allan's letter must have been meant for the eyes of Poe himself as much as for the Secretary of War.[334] It was plain notice to the young poet that his guardian considered him as merely an object of charity, and that beyond his efforts to get him off his hands and into West Point, he had no further interest. "Frankly, sir, do I declare that he is no relation to me whatever," did not mean that he was about to make Poe his heir, or at home any more in his house. In formally carrying out his promise to his dead wife, only John Allan's honor, and not his affection, was involved. The result of Poe's application was the usual one. The letters were put on file in the War Department and nothing happened for months.

Mr. Allan had given Poe $50 when he left Richmond. Poe apparently merely stopped off in Washington to present his letters at the War Department and then went on to Baltimore, where we find him before the middle of May, 1829. Poe, immediately proceeded to look up his own relatives, and, on May 20, he writes John Allan that he has succeeded in finding his aged grandmother, Mrs. (General) David Poe and his other relations. In the meantime he had drawn on Richmond for an additional $50, a draft which his guardian honored. On May 18, John Allan writes from Richmond telling Poe that Colonel Preston had written a warm

[333] Hon. John H. Eaton, then Secretary of War, also bore the title of "Major." In the South this would not be forgotten. See also James Preston's letter.

[334] Hon. John H. Eaton of Tennessee, was Secretary of War in Jackson's cabinet 1829–1837. He was a politician of great influence in the Jackson "democracy" and did not escape without grave scandals being connected with his name. John Allan was evidently not anxious to be beholden to him — "For myself I ask nothing."

letter of recommendation in his behalf, and at the same time enclosing a check for $100 with the admonition *to be prudent and be careful.* Colonel Preston's letter which John Allan is evidently somewhat astonished to find so " warm," was as follows:

Richmond, Va., May 13, 1829.

Sir, — Some of the friends of young Mr. Edgar Poe have solicited me to address a letter to you in his favor, believing that it may be useful to him in his application to the Government for military service. I know Mr. Poe and am acquainted with the fact of his having been born under circumstances of great adversity. I also know from his own productions and other undoubted proofs that he is a young gentleman of genius and taleants. I believe he is destined to be distinguished, since he has already gained reputation for taleants and attainements at the University of Virginia. I think him possessed of feeling and character peculiarly intitling him to public patronage.

Very respectfully your obt. serv't,
James P. Preston

Major John Eaton, *Sec'y of War,* Washington.

This letter is more than a formal recommendation obtained by political influence; it is the warm recognition of Poe's " taleants " by a friend and neighbor who had known him from childhood.[335] Despite his unusual spelling, James Preston had sufficient literary foresight to be distinguished as the first person who linked the word *genius* with the name of Poe.

Poe had several good reasons for going to Baltimore from Washington. In the first place, he must have been thoroughly advertised of the fact that by this time he was no longer welcome " at home." With the waning of John Allan's " affection," he also felt the desirability of establishing more firmly the family ties with his blood relations in Baltimore, and the importance of obtaining from them whatever influence the name of his grandfather, who had been Quartermaster in the Revolutionary War,

335 The Hon. James P. Preston — " Mr. Preston," was the father of young Preston who had been one of Poe's rather intimate playmates at Mr. Clarke's school; they sat on the same bench together there, and young Preston had at one time been in the habit of taking home some of Poe's schoolboy verses for his mother's criticism. In the letter which Mr. Preston gave Poe to the Secretary of War there is a patent reference to this.

might have with the War Department.[336] Poe's ignorance about his own family up until this time seems to have been almost complete. Grandfather Poe's exploits in the Revolution had taken on an importance by family recital and the lapse of time which had already breveted him " General." Edgar was delighted. He was, in short, only now beginning to find out who he really was. " Edgar Allan " was about to become completely metamorphosed into " Edgar Poe." There was also another reason why Poe desired to be in Baltimore, one which he had not so far dared to reveal to his guardian. His real interest in life was now centered upon getting out another volume of poems. With May, 1829, the long and indomitable struggle for literary recognition really begins.

Once in Baltimore, Poe lost no time in pushing the publication of *Al Aaraaf* and the new and revised poems which he now had on hand. His experience with *Tamerlane and Other Poems* had taught him the futility of merely printing his own work with no means of publication or public notice, and he now set about preparing the way for his next book in the manner which he followed for the rest of his life. This was to send his work to some well-known writer or influential person, and, under the guise of soliciting their criticism, to obtain a hold on their interest and influence.

A day or so after his arrival in Baltimore, May 11, 1829, he called upon William Wirt,[337] the author of the then well-known *Letters of a British Spy*. Poe had met Mr. Wirt previously in Richmond, and he now left with him the manuscripts of *Al Aaraaf,* telling him that he was submitting it immediately to a Philadelphia publisher. He also asked for Mr. Wirt's comment, doubtless hoping for a letter that would have influence with publishers. Wirt, who was a semi-literary person, was completely

[336] Preference of appointment was given to the descendants of Revolutionary officers.

[337] William Wirt had just retired to Baltimore as ex U. S. Attorney General. In 1831 he represented the Cherokee Indians in their famous suit before the Supreme Court of the United States, to retain their lands (the Cherokee Nation *vs.* the State of Georgia). The court held that it had no jurisdiction in the case. An important constitutional principle was involved, and Wirt's arguments were most able (Niles XXXVI. 231, 258.9; Stat. Man., II, 709). See also (Wooster *vs.* the State of Georgia), 1832, for an interesting side light on this case.

mystified by the imagery of *Al Aaraaf,* a poem that still continues to trouble the " well ordered " and academic mind. He, however, replied the same evening — having evidently put in the day somewhat badly with " Nesace " in the limbo of *Al Aaraaf* — yet with kindly feelings withal for the young author to whom he writes:

Baltimore, May 11, 1829.

. . . I am sensible of the compliment you pay me in submitting it to my judgment and only regret that you have not a better counsellor. But the truth is that having never written poetry myself, nor read much poetry for many years, I consider myself as by no means a competent judge. . . . This is no doubt an old-fashioned idea resulting from the causes I have mentioned, my ignorance of modern poetry and modern taste. You perceive therefore that I am not qualified to judge of the merits of your poem. It will, I know, please modern readers — the notes contain a good deal of curious and useful information, but to deal candidly with you (as I am bound to do) I should doubt whether the poem will take with old-fashioned readers like myself. . . . I would advise you, therefore, as a friend to get an introduction to Mr. Walsh or Mr. Hopkinson or some other critic in Philadelphia, versed in modern. . . .[338]

Armed or disarmed with this letter from a legal critic who thought that, " the notes contain a good deal of curious and *useful* information," Poe set out at six o'clock the next morning on the steam boat for Philadelphia with his manuscript in his pocket.

In Philadelphia, Poe submitted his poems to Messrs. Carey, Lea & Carey, and had a short interview with Mr. Lea at the firm's office on Chestnut Street, in which Mr. Lea suggested that the " author " might contribute some poems to the *Atlantic Souvenir.* Meanwhile, he took the manuscript of *Al Aaraaf* under advisement while Poe returned to Baltimore.

Before the end of the month, Poe probably received from the Philadelphia firm the usual reply of publishers to a young poet, saying that if they could be guaranteed from all loss, they would undertake publication. Hence on May 29, 1829, we find Poe writing to John Allan inclosing him William Wirt's letter, enlarging on the importance of a young poet's being *brought before the eye*

[338] From the mutilated manuscript in William Wirt's handwriting, with the conclusion of the letter and the signature missing, now in the Boston Public Library. Dr. Thomas Ollive Mabbott is to be credited for making public this letter.

of the world early, and asking his guardian to write the publishers, guaranteeing the book to the extent of $100. In making this request, Poe assures Mr. Allan that he has long ago given up Byron as a model.[339] The merchant's reply, which was unusually prompt, was to sternly refuse all aid, and "strongly censure" Poe for his "conduct."

More correspondence about *Al Aaraaf* followed between "father and son,"[340] but although Poe grew humbler, Mr. Allan remained as always — firm. The incident seems to have affected their relations seriously. John Allan was both disgusted and alarmed at this token that Poe's literary ambitions were unchanged, and he seems to have felt that his ward was not very much in earnest about West Point. Although it was obviously not Poe's fault that the appointment was not forthcoming, and equally patent that he would have to exist in the meantime, John Allan, while he retired to his plantation during the summer days, seems to have left his "son" to shift largely for himself. Poe would have liked to come home he tells his guardian, but the latter replied that he was not especially anxious to see him, and let it go at that. By the end of July, 1829, the young poet was in precarious circumstances. Finally, on July 26, John Allan sent him a little money with the suggestion that a man of genius ought not to have to apply for aid; to which taunt Poe replied, that a little more timely assistance would prevent the application.

As John Allan's suspicions of Poe's honesty and ability in money matters have to a certain extent been handed down as part of the Poe tradition, a brief examination of Poe's financial transactions at this time may be of value in making plain his typical difficulties.

By John Allan's own accounting on the back of one of Poe's

[339] This remark arouses interesting speculations. Byron, and the influence of the Byron cult on young Poe was doubtless something which John Allan abhorred and had held responsible for many of his ward's "immoral" flirtings with literature. The reader will remember that *Don Quixote* and *Gil Blas* were also on the Scotchman's *index expurgatorius*.

[340] Poe seems to have replied at the same time to Carey, Lea & Carey asking them to hold his poems until they heard further. The manuscript of *Al Aaraaf* remained with them up until the end of July, 1829, by which time all hope of Mr. Allan's help was at an end and Poe wrote them withdrawing it.

letters, it appears that from about the middle of May to the nineteenth of July, 1829, the merchant provided Poe in all with $200. On this amount the youth was expected to board and clothe himself for a period of ten weeks, pay his traveling expenses from Richmond to Washington, and from Washington to Baltimore — then a matter of about a day each way — and take care of all contingent expenses, in short, as John Allan recommended, " be prudent and be careful." The young man was just out of the army, and except for the suit of mourning which was given to him in Richmond, he was without civilian clothes. Allowing for the value of money at that time, $200 might have covered this, had there been no extra expenses. But Poe tells his guardian that he had to take up the note of $50 which he had given to his substitute, and we know also that he had gone to Philadelphia and returned to Baltimore in May. Allowing for the money he sent the substitute, we now learn that Poe had spent $104 between early May and June 22, 1829, when he tells his guardian that he was robbed of $46, " all I had," while sharing a room with Mosher Poe in the *Beltzhoover Hotel* in Baltimore. By searching the pockets of his cousin, who thus immortalized himself, Poe was able the next night to recover $10. The man begged not to be exposed on account of his wife, although Poe gives his name in the letter to John Allan.[341] The next remittance which Poe received from Mr. Allan, was on July 26.

It would therefore appear that during the Summer of 1829, for a period of one month at least, Edgar Allan Poe managed to exist on $10, probably with the connivance of his landlady and his relations. The exact form of dissipation in which the young poet indulged at 33 cents a day does not appear at this writing to be clear. Nor was this all, John Allan's censure of his extravagance was bitter and his expression of his suspicions extreme. For even suggesting the publication of the poems, Poe is now full of apologies. Nevertheless the manuscript was still left with Carey, Lea & Carey, and Poe, meanwhile, had succeeded in getting an intro-

[341] This name has been deleted from the *Valentine Museum Letters,* letter No. 13. Mosher Poe was a second cousin of Edgar's. There is no doubt the story is true or Poe would not have dared to give his cousin's name to John Allan. In one facsimile reproduced in the *Valentine Letters* the name " Mosher " occurs.

duction to Mr. Walsh, the editor of the *American Quarterly Review,* and obtained the promise of his help. In the interim there was no word from the War Department about the appointment.

During the entire period of young Poe's stay in Baltimore from May, 1829, until the end of that year, the letters he received from John Allan were filled with sarcasms, suspicions, and reproaches. An occasional remittance generally came in time to save him from being thrown into the street, but the anxiety with which he accounts to his guardian for every penny gives indubitable evidence of the spirit in which the help was conferred. Aside from "blowing the boy up" for thinking of wasting money on poems, the chief bones of contention were the older man's suspicion about the amount of money given to the substitute — which no end of obvious facts and explanation served to allay — and the constant doubts expressed to Poe about his zeal in the matter of obtaining the appointment. A letter from Poe in which he told his guardian that he had just found out that he was a grandson of General Benedict Arnold,[342] must have caused Mr. Allan to exclaim "I might have known it," for such were his sentiments. It seems probable that at the time Poe himself may have thought this to be true. The story, of course, came from the fact that his maternal grandmother's name *had* been Arnold. Aside from this, there was nothing in it. Perhaps, after all, it was only a sly little hoax on the part of Poe who enjoyed a well fabricated fib, and knew the exact expression that it would summon upon John Allan's countenance — the grim mouth relaxing for a moment into a sardonic but withal annoyed smile. Whatever may have been his motive, however, in conveying to Richmond this devastating piece of information, which certainly would not have aided him with the War Department,[343] he lost no opportunity of proving to his guardian his earnestness about West Point. Poverty spurred him to it, an effect that may have been calculated by his guardian, and on July 23 he set out on foot for Washington, the payment of

[342] Poe to John Allan, June 25, 1829, Letter No. 13, *Valentine Museum Collection.*

[343] Had Poe not succeeded in getting the appointment, this story would have been an excellent excuse. See note 304.



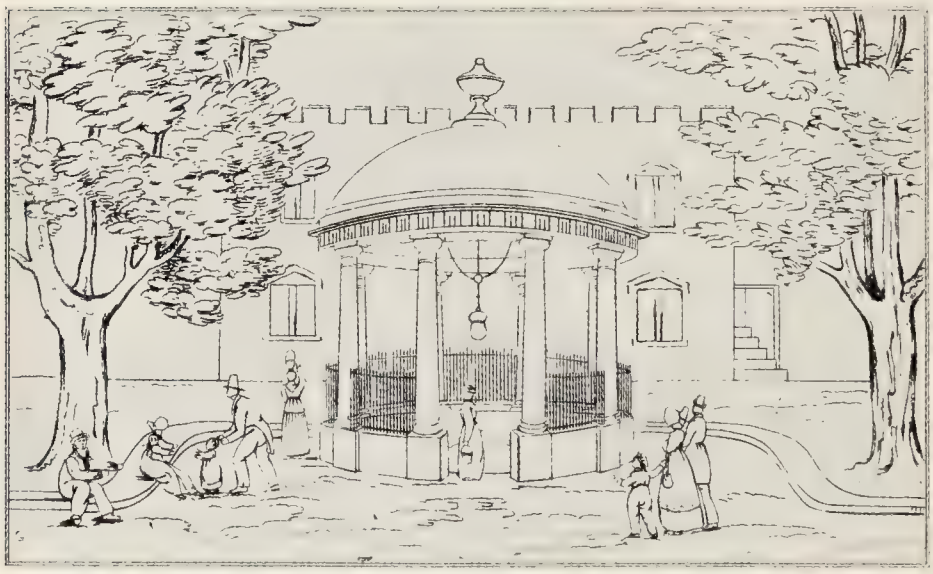
Baltimore, about the time of Poe's first stay there in 1829 and 1830

Showing the effect of BYRON's and MOORE's "Oriental Poems," and such works as IRVINGS' *Alhambra*, on the American landscape. The artist here makes Baltimore look like Bagdad. The dome of the Roman Catholic Cathedral and the shaft of the Washington Monument become the domes and minarets of mosques. Note the Arab steeds in the foreground. Compare this picture with the one at page 317

From an old print. Courtesy of the Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore, Maryland



Baltimore Assembly Room



Baltimore City Fountain

Scenes in Early Baltimore familiar to Poe

From two old illustrations
Courtesy of the Maryland Historical Society

a board bill of $40 having exhausted the larger part of a long expected remittance from Richmond received the day before.

After walking to Washington, Poe had a personal interview with the Secretary of War who told him there was a surplus of ten cadets then on the roll at West Point. But he advised him not to withdraw his letters of recommendation " for use elsewhere," as Poe says, because of the numerous resignations at West Point which usually took place during the summer encampment. If these resignations should exceed ten, Poe would be sure of his appointment in September; if not, Mr. Eaton assured him he would be among the first appointed for the following year. Poe was afraid that his age might interfere, but he was assured by the Secretary of War that he might call himself twenty-one until he was twenty-two. The interview ended with a remark from Mr. Eaton that the trip to Washington had been unnecessary. After which the young man had the pleasure of walking back to Baltimore. From Baltimore he writes John Allan on July 26, that he has explained everything to him that needed explanation and left no stone unturned in the pursuit of his object. In great perplexity he adds that he wishes Mr. Allan would give him directions as to what course he is to pursue. He says that he would have returned home to Richmond but for the fact that his guardian had said he was not especially anxious to see him.

Poe's position was in fact at this time most trying. His guardian had told him that he was " forgiven," yet the tone of his letters, and his continuing to keep him at arms' length, and on starvation allowance, were proofs of how he really felt. If this were not enough, there was the letter to the Secretary of War which Poe must have seen, as it was given to him as a personal introduction to Major Eaton. All this was puzzling and painful to the young man, again and again he begs his " father " to come out in the open, assuring him pathetically that since Charlottesville he has done nothing to offend him.

. . . I thought *that had been forgiven,* at least you told me so — I know that I have done nothing since to deserve your displeasure — . As regards the poem, I have offended only in asking your approbation —

I can publish it upon the terms you mentioned — but will have no more to do with it without your entire approbation — I will wait with great anxiety for your answer. You must be aware how important it is that I should hear from you soon — as I do not know how to act.

But his anxiety was not relieved for a fortnight. In the meantime under date of August 4, Poe writes again saying how anxious he is to return home. With almost nothing to live on in Baltimore, and no assurance of more, the "anxiety" is not hard to understand. No reply having come from Richmond, on July 28, Poe had written Carey, Lea & Carey, asking for the return of his manuscript, for which he bravely says he has made a better disposition than he could have hoped for. Whether he had really done so is doubtful. The expression was probably meant to cover his own disappointment while leaving the best of impressions upon the Philadelphia publishers.

Baltimore
July 28th 1829
Rec'd *July* 30″
Ans″ *Aug.* 3″

Messrs. Carey, Lea & Carey

Gentlemen —

Having made a better disposition of my poems than I had any right to expect, (inducing me to decline publication on my own account) I would thank you to return me the MSS: by ~~the gentleman who hands you this~~ — mail.

I should have been proud of having your firm for my publishers & would have preferred publishing, with your name, even at a disadvantage had my circumstances admitted of so doing.

Perhaps, at some future day, I may have the honor of your press, which I most sincerely desire —

Mr. Lea, during our short interview, at your store, mentioned *The Atlantic Souvenir* and spoke of my attempting something for that work. I know nothing which could give me greater pleasure than to see any of my productions, in so becoming a dress & in such good society as "The Souvenir" would ensure them — notwithstanding the assertions of Mr. Jn Neal to the contrary, who now & then hitting, thro' sheer impudence, upon a correct judgment in matters of authorship, is most unenviably rediculous whenever he touches the fine arts —

As I am unacquainted with the method of proceeding in offering any piece for acceptance (having been sometime absent from this coun-

try) [344] would you, Gentlemen, have the kindness to set me in the right way —

Nothing could give me greater pleasure than any communication from Mess[rs] Carey Lea & Carey —

With the greatest respect
& best wishes
I am Gentlemen
Your most ob[d] Serv[t].
EDGAR A. POE

On August 10, Mr. Allan again sent his ward a remittance, apparently accompanied by bitter complaints about the money spent on the substitute, despite the fact that the necessity for the expenditure had been amply explained several times before. Poe says that he can live on $8 or $10 a month, "anything with which you think it is possible to exist," and ends with a request to have his trunk sent to Baltimore in care of H. W. Boal, Jr. This trunk contained some books and papers. On August 19, Mr. Allan sent Poe $50 on which he existed for three months. During that time Mr. Allan went to the Hot Springs, a visit that marks the second attack of a complaint that finally proved fatal some five years later. In the meantime Carey, Lea & Carey had returned *Al Aaraaf* and Poe was trying to place it in Baltimore.

August, 1829, marks the beginning of an association that was a vital one in Poe's life. He had gone to live with the Clemms. At that time Mrs. Maria Clemm, Poe's aunt, was living in a two story house with an attic in Mechanic's Row, Milk Street. She seems to have occupied the upper part of the house together with her little daughter Virginia, her son Henry, old Mrs. David Poe (the poet's grandmother), and William Henry Leonard Poe. The addition of Edgar was undoubtedly a heavy burden on her already overcrowded household. Poe tells his guardian that old Mrs. Poe was a paralytic, that Mrs. Clemm was, if possible, in a still worse case, and that his brother Henry was so far gone in drink as to be unable to help himself.

[344] Poe's *seeming* allusion here to a trip abroad is the first evidence of his intentions to cover up the period of his army service by claiming for himself the prestige of foreign travel: John Allan had impressed upon him the social disgrace of enlistment.

The poverty-stricken Clemm-Poe household seems to have existed, and they could have done little more than that, on a small pension received by Mrs. Poe, the wife of the "General," on the wages of Henry Clemm, a stone cutter, the driblets of money received by Edgar from Richmond, and the sewing which Mrs. Clemm worked on, when she was able. Henry Poe was for a time after his return from sea employed as a clerk in the law offices of one Mr. Henry Didier, but he was dying of tuberculosis and given up as Poe says to drink.

Edgar apparently shared a back attic room with his elder brother, and probably helped to nurse him even at this time. In this house the poet first met his cousin, Virginia Maria Clemm, then a little girl seven years old who later became his wife.

Virginia seems at that time to have been a merry little school girl, rather plump, with brown hair, violet eyes, and a disposition that was her chief charm. Doubtless she romped about the house with big Cousin Eddie, who called her "Siss" or "Sissie," and the childlike and helpless affection, one of complete trust on her part, and of protection and solicitude on Poe's, now began. Despite the fond assertions of innumerable romantic biographers, it is extremely unlikely that it ever amounted to much more. Mrs. Clemm was a woman whose maternal instinct was tremendously accentuated. She appears to have taken her young nephew to her heart from the first. A paralytic mother, a troublesome son, a dying nephew, and an utterly dependent daughter were not sufficient to satisfy her all inclusive motherliness. To these she now added the sore pressed Edgar Allan Poe. For him it was the beginning of one of the most benign and, at the same time, devastating influences of his career.

Warned by the complete demise of his first book — owing to the lack of any adequate public notice — from the rear garret of Mrs. Clemm's house in Baltimore, Poe now began to send out through the Autumn and early Winter of 1829 letters and poems to editors and critics in order to prepare the way for the volume containing *Al Aaraaf,* which he was determined to publish in spite of John Allan, West Point, poverty, and the interruptions of a closely packed household.

To this career of literary ambition he was driven by the double necessity of expressing the intense desires of his nature, even by this time thwarted in many ways, and that vivid sense of the reality and all importance of the ego known as pride, a pride that Poe identified with the archangel Israfel, but which, in some of its aspects, belonged equally to Lucifer. It was no accident that the young poet had already years before taken Byron for his master, not only in attitude and verse, but in spirit. From Baltimore, Poe, as we have seen, had written Mr. Allan that he had given up Byron as a model, and in a certain sense he had, for he was now mature enough to realize that no mere follower can ever achieve. The necessity for originality, even in adaptation from others, was firmly fixed in his mind. But the pride was not gone. Above all obstacles it rose supreme, the inward sense of power, the necessity for justification, the sense of the importance of his utterance, was now more than ever fixed upon him. Hence his unequivocal prophecies of ensuing greatness which so disgusted John Allan, the force which insulated him to a great extent from all outward circumstances — always in the end unimportant to those who live within themselves — and such lines as these in *Tamerlane:*

> There *is* a power in the high spirit
> To *know* the fate it will inherit:
> The soul which knows such power, will still
> Find *Pride* the ruler of *its* will. . . .[345]

Thus, despite all untoward and often degrading circumstances, the great work went on in the back garret of Mrs. Clemm where Henry lay coughing himself to death, in the same room with Edgar, or stumbled in late at night in his cups to boast drunkenly of his exploits in South America and other romantic lands beyond the seas he had traversed some years before, exploits to which Edgar listened eagerly, and made his own.

In the room downstairs Mrs. Clemm sewed while Virginia ran back and forth carrying things to the helpless grandmother. She, poor lady, doubtless reminisced, as old people will, of the time

[345] The italics are Poe's.

when in her youth, as the wife of a Quartermaster of the Continental Armies, her husband had provided money and forage for La Fayette and his soldiers, while she and the girls of Baltimore with their own hands cut out five hundred pairs of trousers for the breechless troops of Washington — " and now, how small her pension was! " Towards evening, Henry Clemm would come home covered with stone dust; Edgar from wandering about the docks or haunting the office of the *Federal Gazette and Baltimore Daily Advertiser* on the corner of St. Paul and Bank Streets, perhaps with the manuscript of *Al Aaraaf* in his pocket which he had shown to William Gwynn, the editor, and gotten small encouragement. David Poe had once worked for Gwynn when he kept a law office, and knowing the family traits, Mr. Gwynn had remarked, when he saw the poetry of the runaway actor's son, that it " was indicative of a tendency to anything but the business of matter-of-fact life." A remark which time has shown to be true, but, as so often happens, irrelevant.

After nightfall, with the sewing laid aside, the family would gather about the table by the feeble light of a few tallow dips to sup on the single dish which Mrs. Clemm had cooked, and sometimes by her importunity with friends or relatives, provided. Grandma Poe would be drawn up close to the small coal fire, and they would discuss the last depressing letter from " Pa " in Richmond, while Virginia chattered, or did her sums with " Cousin Eddie " to help. Then bed-time, for bed-time came early in those days to folk with a scant stock of candles, only one for Henry and Edgar as they climbed to their attic, Henry complaining, and coughing himself into a restless slumber, while Edgar, as long as the candle lasted, bent over his papers, driving the pen on and on toward that far-off shining goal. He was arrested at last by the midnight ghosts of " Helen " and Elmira, or his dear " Ma " with the agate lamp in her hand in the old house on Tobacco Alley. There the air from the docks used to blow in, waving the curtain fitfully — as it did here — reminding him exquisitely, but exquisitely painfully, of the vanished home in Richmond. The clothes that he took off were a little more ragged every night, despite the obstinate needle of Mrs. Clemm. Undressing under the

eaves of the low-ceilinged room, Poe brushed them and folded them carefully, before he lay down by the side of the brother whose face was flushed, but whose hands and feet had already begun to take on an eternal cold.

September, 1829, passed and there was no cadet's appointment from the War Department. The few letters from Richmond became more urgent and severe. Mr. Allan was greatly alarmed. Suppose, after all, that his convenient plan for providing for Edgar at the public cost had failed! He accused Poe of having deceived him in regard to Mr. Eaton's promise for September appointments. In reply Poe refers him to his former letters giving the Secretary of War's exact words, pointing out that his guardian is " mistaken." He will, he says, go to Washington, however, and get the Secretary to give him his appointment in advance together with an order to repair to West Point for examination the following June. These letters he will ask the Secretary of War to forward to Mr. Allan " so that all doubts will be removed " — and he adds with a touch of irony, " I will tell him (the Secretary of War) why I want it at present and I think he will give it."

But Poe did not do this. He was without sufficient funds when he wrote this letter (October 30) even to walk to Washington again. The offer, however, seems to have quieted John Allan, who probably did not care to be put into the position of doubting the good faith of the Secretary of War. Nevertheless, he did not reply, and two weeks later Poe is forced to write him again telling his guardian that (November 12) he is almost without clothes and about to be ejected by his landlady,[346] as he has received nothing from home since the middle of August. John Allan at last replied and sent him $80. Nearly all of this was already due for board and in the next letter Poe was forced to beg his " father " to get half a strip of linen from Mr. Galt, which Aunt Maria Clemm would make up into sheets " without charge."

[346] This would seem to indicate that Poe did not live continuously with the Clemms. His places of abode were no doubt largely contingent upon the state of the supplies from Richmond, and both the Herring and Poe cousins doubtless gave him shelter from time to time. Mrs. Clemm, however, says that Poe lived with her while in Baltimore in 1829. The statement does not necessarily mean " all the time." Prof. Woodberry doubted Mrs. Clemm's statement, but the *Valentine Letters* now confirm it.

It must be remembered that in making these appeals, Poe was carrying out Mr. Allan's own desire of waiting for the cadet's appointment, and that while so waiting he could not obtain employment when it was known that, at any moment, he might have to leave his job and be ordered off to West Point. Furthermore, the youth who was without clothes in Baltimore in November, 1829, was the ward of a rich man whose prosperous warehouse was piled high with goods. Yet, says Poe, " if you could me a piece of linen, or a half piece at *Mr. Galt's* . . . I could get it made up *gratis* by Aunt Maria. . . . One wonders if " dear Pa " actually loosened up and did send the linen on by the boat, or whether Aunt Maria provided that *gratis,* too. The letter containing this modest request is the last on record that Poe wrote to his " father " from Baltimore in 1829. Something had happened which mollified even John Allan, and the world now first began to take a faint notice of Edgar Allan Poe.

Not very far from Mrs. Clemm, on Exeter near State Street, lived Mr. Henry Herring who had married Poe's Aunt Eliza, the same who had written the touching letter to Frances Allan many years before.[347] There were five children in the Herring house, cousins with whom young Poe was soon on intimate terms, writing poetry in his Cousin Mary's album, and being much about the place. Aunt Eliza had died some years before, but Mr. Herring, who seems to have been acquainted with a number of literary men and editors about Baltimore, succeeded in interesting them and some other of the Poe cousins in Edgar's work. Both Mr. Herring and George Poe had known a Mr. John Neal when he had been in Baltimore as an editor a short while before. They had all belonged to the Delphian Club on Bank Lane, better known as " The Tusculum." Mr. Gwynn, to whom Poe had lately shown *Al Aaraaf,* was also a member.

John Neal who wrote under the pen name of " Jehu O'Cataract," had gone North to start a paper in Portland, Maine. This, he afterwards continued as the *Yankee and Boston Literary Gazette,* in whose columns his literary criticisms were received as oracles. George Poe, the father of Neilson Poe, seems to have

[347] See Chapter III, page 45.

used his influence with his old friend John Neal, and to have suggested to his literary cousin Edgar that he send Neal some poetry for editorial comment. This Poe did and was rewarded soon after by the following notice in the columns of the *Yankee* for September, 1829:

> If E. A. P. of Baltimore — whose lines about "Heaven" though he professes to regard them as altogether superior to anything in the whole range of American poetry, save two or three trifles referred to, are, though nonsense, rather exquisite nonsense — would but do himself justice might (sic) make a beautiful and perhaps a magnificent poem. There is a good deal here to justify such a hope.

These words, said Poe, were, "*The very first words of Encouragement I ever remember to have heard.*" [348] But Neal ends the little critique with, "He should have signed it Bah! We have no room for others."

Nevertheless, Poe took the criticism in good part and in the December issue of the *Yankee* he was allowed to print a letter covering four pages containing copious selections from the forthcoming volume. Among other things Poe says of himself:

> I would give the world to embody one half the ideas afloat in my imagination. . . . I appeal to you as a man who loves the same beauty which I adore — the beauty of the natural blue sky and the sunshiny earth. . . . I am and have been from childhood, an idler. It cannot therefore be said that
>
> 'I left a calling for this idle trade,
> A duty broke — a father disobeyed.'
>
> for I have no father — nor mother.

John Allan's reproaches were evidently in his mind, and as he was often without resources in Baltimore, the censure of his relatives for writing poetry instead of "going to work" may possibly be reflected here.

The whole letter is typical of Poe's method of puffing his own work. It amounted, in short, to a long announcement of his forthcoming volume. John Neal prefaced it with these editorial remarks:

[348] Poe means by an editor in the public prints. It must be remembered that Poe's "attack" on Neal in the letter to Carey, Lea & Carey was made two months *before* Neal's remarks in the *Yankee*. See "Poe and John Neal" in the Appendix.

The following passages are from the manuscript works of a young author, about to be published in Baltimore. He is entirely a stranger to us, but with all their faults, if the remainder of *Al Aaraaf* and *Tamerlane* are as good as the body of the extracts here given, to say nothing of the more extraordinary parts, he will deserve to stand high — very high, in the estimation of the shining brotherhood, etc.

This editorial prelude concludes with some highly moral and patronizing advice to the poet's extreme youth, quite typical of the time.

The notice in the September *Yankee* by the famous John Neal was probably of direct service to Poe in two ways. It must have been drawn to John Allan's attention by the admiring Nancy Valentine, or Poe's good friends the Galts, and caused Mr. Allan to reflect a little. At any rate, about the middle of December, Poe received $80 from his guardian, and then or later, permission to return home. With Neal's puff in hand Poe was also enabled to approach the publishers in Baltimore, the favorable notice of a Northern critic of note being then, as now, impressive in the South, which pays no serious attention to its own writers until they are praised elsewhere. The result, in Poe's case, seems to have been that his book was accepted. On November 18, in the "linen" letter, he writes John Allan that his poems have been accepted upon advantageous terms by Hatch & Dunning of Baltimore, "they to print, and give the author 250 copies of the book." Mr. Dunning, Poe adds, well knowing that his guardian might suspect that some expense was involved, would confirm the terms himself upon an immediate visit to Richmond.

Heralded thus somewhat dubiously, but on the whole in a not unkindly way, Poe's second volume, *Al Aaraaf, Tamerlane, and Minor Poems,* appeared in Baltimore in December, 1829, published by Hatch & Dunning, and printed by Matchett & Woods, the same firm which then printed the *Baltimore Directory*. It was a thin octavo volume bound in blue boards, containing seventy-one pages padded out with a considerable number of extra fly-leaves upon which appeared mottoes quoted from English and Spanish poets. The margins were more than ample. The dedication, a line from Cleveland, reads,

AL AARAAF,

TAMERLANE,

AND

MINOR POEMS.

BY EDGAR A. POE.

BALTIMORE:
HATCH & DUNNING.

1829.

Title Page of *Al Aaraaf, Tamerlane, and Minor Poems, Baltimore 1829*

Edgar Allan Poe's second published volume

NOTE: A title page with the imprint "1820" is known to exist. This was a printer's error

Courtesy of John T. Snyder, Esq., of Pelham, New York

Who drinks the deepest? — here's to him.

In this book, *Al Aaraaf,* and *Tamerlane* were the principal offerings. The latter was dedicated to John Neal, " respectfully," with the advertisement,

This poem was printed for publication in Boston, in the year 1827, but suppressed through circumstances of a private nature.[349]

As a matter of fact, it was completely rewritten in conformity with the outcome of the adventure with Elmira, and, from a literary standpoint, greatly improved. The two main long poems were followed by a brief preface, and nine miscellaneous short poems of which three are revised reprints from the Boston volume. The second of the nine, beginning " I saw thee on thy bridal day," obviously refers to Elmira Royster, by this time Mrs. Shelton. *Al Aaraaf* is an attempt on the part of the youthful poet to put in the form of an allegory his philosophy of beauty.[350] The allegory is obscure, but the poem contains many exquisite lines.

In general it may be said that Poe's second book with all of its juvenile faults was his first real approach to a contribution to American poetry. It marked a distinct advance over his first volume of two years before, and embodied in its lines some of his characteristic landscapes tinged with his mystical melancholy and the autobiographical records of his love affairs. The gain in his handling of rhythms is marked. Certainly the landscapes bear indubitable marks of his South Carolina sojourn.[351]

[349] See Chapter X, page 202.

[350] *Al Aaraaf* is the region placed by the Arabian poets between the upper and nether regions, neither hell nor heaven, where those spirits who deserve to enter neither, dwell. Poe has personified his ideal of beauty in a beautiful maiden by the name of "Nesace" who dwells in a distant star —

> " — for there
> Her world lay lolling on the golden air
> Near four bright suns — "

Poe has caught some of the tremendous sweep of space from Milton, and there are reminiscences of *Queen Mab,* with a strange admixture of Moore and Byron and perhaps a trace of Pinkney. Despite this, the fault of a young poet, it is peculiarly his own. The universe is ransacked for beautiful things to make up its lines, with notes, in which the young poet takes a pardonable pride.

[351] This is the " foreign influence " pointed out by numerous critics in Poe's second volume, due to his trip abroad in 1827, now known to be a pure myth.

Poe remained in Baltimore until the end of 1829 seeing his book off the press and dispatching copies to editors for review and notice. On December 29, 1829, he sent a copy to his friend John Neal, the editor of the *Yankee* in Boston, with this characteristic letter:

I thank you, sir, for the kind interest you express for my worldly as well as poetical welfare — a sermon of prosing would have met with much less attention.

You will see that I have made the alterations you suggest . . . and and some other corrections of the same kind — there is much, however, (in metre) to be corrected — for I did not observe it till too late.

I wait consciously for your notice of the book — I think the best lines for *sound* are those in *Al Aaraaf* —

There Nature speaks and even ideal things,
Flap shadowy sounds from visionary wings.

I am certain that these lines have never been surpassed. —

Of late eternal condor years
So shake the very air on high,
With tumult as they thunder by
I hardly have had time for cares
Through gazing on the unquiet sky.

'It is well to think well of one's self' — so says somebody. You will do me justice, however.

Most truly yours,
EDGAR A. POE

After which Poe said good-bye to the Clemms, and the Herring and Poe cousins, packed up what little belongings he had, and taking advantage of John Allan's permission to return home in the luster of his new laurels, went to Richmond before the holidays were over, taking along a generous supply of the copies of the new book for distribution among his friends.

Upon his return to Richmond, Poe found his old room ready for him at the Allan house. It was then and long afterwards known as "Edgar's Room" to all the servants and the friends of the family. During the second Mrs. Allan's régime the name was probably suppressed. After Mrs. Clemm's crowded and humble quarters, the spaciousness, the luxury, and the gardens

of the big house must have been delightful. The kindly black faces of Jim and Dabney were there to welcome him, and their hands to serve him, while "Aunt Nancy's" affection was as loyal as ever. But with what memories must he have wandered about the house! Frances Allan was gone, her room was empty, and there was no Elmira to come and sit in the swing or look through the telescope. That Poe was in Richmond by the first week in January, 1830, is certain, as he was supplied with clothes at that time by orders upon *Ellis & Allan*, among other things, a fine "London hat." Probably, despite the darning needle of Mrs. Clemm, his wardrobe was in a sad condition after the period of poverty in Baltimore.

The second night after his return, Poe met Thomas Bolling, his old University of Virginia acquaintance (altogether, as his letters show, a charming fellow), at Sanxey's Book Store then at 120 Main Street, Richmond. Tom Bolling was home for the holidays from Charlottesville, and the two boys had many reminiscences to exchange, not having seen each other for two years. Poe gave Bolling a copy of *Al Aaraaf* and regaled him with an apocryphal account of his "trip abroad," since the real facts of his rather uneventful life in the army as an enlisted man did not supply the adventurous background which the author of two volumes of poetry required. Bolling was much impressed, and we may be sure carried back to the University the news of the brilliant and interesting career of "Gaffy," news which no doubt helped to clear the atmosphere there of the cloud which rested upon the erstwhile young gambler on account of unpaid debts.

Thus the "Poe legend" was already beginning to take shape with Poe himself as the prime source.[344] All of this was at that time due to his desire to appear a man set apart, an adventurous fellow, who had left the University to see the world, and had succeeded.[352] In these stories he seems always to have embodied some of the actual experiences of his brother Henry.[353]

352 A Richmond newspaper for January 19, 1830, Poe's twenty-first birthday, prints the acknowledgment of the receipt of *Al Aaraaf*, etc.

353 The persistence of the story about Poe's "trip abroad" is incredible. Russian encyclopædias give detailed accounts of his "arrest in St. Petersburg," and, confusing the title of Henry Middleton, the American Consul, with that of

For the rest, Poe was much about town, seeing his old friends and distributing to them in person, or by orders on the Richmond book store, copies of *Al Aaraaf*. As few were capable of understanding the poems, an attitude of amusement, always a convenient mask for ignorance, was the general result. In this the wiseacres of the town were confirmed by a review J. H. Hewitt is supposed to have written for the Baltimore *Minerva and Emerald*, poking fun unmercifully at the new poet. The paper's editor was Rufus Dawes, and Poe may have been mindful of this when he skinned the man alive in *Graham's Magazine*.

Not a great deal is known of this, Poe's last sojourn, in the Allan house at Richmond, in the Spring of 1830. He was still waiting for his appointment to West Point and for that reason was tolerated as a temporary inmate of the establishment, rather than the "son" of the house. John Allan had not long before returned from "The Springs." He was not in very good health, was still troubled over his wife's death and revolving in his mind the fact that he had no heir nor wife to preside over his household, although Miss Valentine remained and took her sister's place most acceptably as later events show. Poe probably came and went as he pleased, being left to his own desires and his room with the beloved books, where the further revision of his poems with new ones was already under way. He probably saw a good deal of the Mackenzies at the Hermitage where Rosalie still lived in the atmosphere of affection which her brother so lacked. Mr. Allan may have tried at times to drown his memories after a not unusual method, although he was by no means given to drink. There is good reason to believe, however, that with the first signs of advancing age and ill health and the loss of his life partner of many years standing, at this particular time he sometimes

"minister," have translated the word "priest." So we have Poe, drunken, of course, being rescued from prison and Siberia by the "Rev. Middleton," Bible in hand. Absurdity can go no farther! Henry Poe, Edgar's brother, *may* have been to St. Petersburg while in the Navy or merchant marine. There is no proof. Poe probably "annexed" some of his brother's adventures. Henry died soon after, so that the rest is silence.

354 "We now hesitate not to say, that no man in America has been more shamefully over-estimated," etc. Poe's article on Rufus Dawes. See Chapter XXI, page 547.

indulged too freely. If so the results were not such as to make things happier for the members of his household. Shortly after the beginning of the year he began to find solace for his sorrows in the companionship of one who had already borne him a daughter. The natural result proved doubly disturbing to his peace of mind.

On May 3, 1830, he had a violent quarrel with Poe.[355] Probably a recurrence of the old charges of idleness and living upon his bounty, in which he heaped reproaches upon his ward, and ended by roundly insulting the young poet about his family, at a time, says Poe, " When you knew my heart was almost breaking." The uncertainty of living in Richmond waiting for the appointment, while the carping and fault-finding tongue of his guardian let no old fault rest, when, too, Frances Allan and Elmira were haunting him like ghosts, all this made such scenes doubly hard to bear, sometimes almost insufferable. The alternative was starving, nakedness, and the loss of opportunity.

A few minutes after this scene Poe wrote to an old army acquaintance at Fortress Monroe, apparently a sergeant in his old company to whom he owed money. Poe addressed him as " Bully," and says that the reason he had not paid the debt was because he could not get the money out of his guardian, although he had tried dozens of times. Poe, it seems, owed sums to several other non-commissioned officers in the old regiment, amounts which he had probably borrowed in the Spring of 1829 on the prospects of the " reconciliation " with Mr. Allan after Frances Allan's death. The small sums he had received from home had not permitted a settlement. From other statements in this letter, it appears that he could not be frank with his guardian about the matter. The trouble John Allan had raised over the extra amount necessary to procure a substitute was probably a sufficient warning that any further revelations about expenditures would be met with a burst of wrath. One Downey from Fortress Monroe had already called upon John Allan and received an

[355] *Valentine Museum Letters,* letter No. 24, page 257. If the young Poe had any knowledge of his guardian's mode of life at this time, and it is quite probable that he had, in view of his great reverence for the memory of his foster-mother, his indignation over his guardian's actions becomes only too clear. The situation does not need to be elaborated.

answer not satisfactory to Poe's " creditors," and this reply Poe is at haste to explain away by saying that *Mr. Allan was not very often sober* and his words could be discounted.

This statement about John Allan is one of the most discreditable and unfortunate that Poe ever made. Whatever the provocation, it was unwise, defamatory to his " father," and eventually the final cause and plausible excuse for his being " disinherited." On this letter the second Mrs. Allan also based her charge that Poe had spent the money provided for the substitute. Sergeant Graves, or " Bully," to whom Poe wrote was not the substitute, however, but simply one of several soldiers about Fort Moultrie to whom the ex-sergeant major owed various small sums. Poe promises payment, and in a most familiar tone, ends by informing " Bully " that the writer is now a cadet. This looks very much as if the Secretary of War had already given Poe the letters to report to West Point for examination, as the latter had suggested that he would in an earlier letter to Mr. Allan while in Baltimore. Only the official confirming letters were now needed; perhaps the exact weight of political influence was still lacking, and events now shaped themselves in such a way as to cause Mr. Allan to secure this and get Poe finally off his hands.

John Allan was now a widower, and a very eligible one in point of fortune, at least. His former wife's sister, Miss Valentine, was running his establishment, and it seems to have occurred to the thrifty merchant that the arrangement already in force might as well be made permanent. About a year before Frances Allan's death he remarked in a letter that Miss Valentine was " as fat and hearty as ever." Doubtless her figure had lost nothing in attractiveness during the interim; she was acquainted with how much sugar he liked in his coffee, she was near at hand, and they were intimately " at home." The result was that he began to pay her marked attentions. What the lady's sentiments were, we do not know. To remain in the same household where she had already lived for twenty-five years, and to become the presiding mistress of one of the finest establishments in Richmond, may not have been without its attractions. Poe, however, seems to have been outraged. Frances Allan was scarcely dead a year, and he was

under no hallucinations as to the delicacy of his guardian's tender emotions. He seems to have protested and to have reminded his "Aunt Nancy" of her dead sister's wrongs. Perhaps he even intruded upon some sentimental scenes. At any rate Miss Valentine refused John Allan's offer, probably influenced by Poe's advice, and the effect was devastating upon what remained of Frances Allan's household. John Allan's indignation must have been implacable. Was he never to be quit of this young upstart, or the household rid of his interference in his perfectly logical and natural plans? He seems to have forthwith determined to put an end to it once and for all. Poe has been accused of trying to prevent his foster-father from having a legitimate heir, but the "other reasons" seem to be sufficient and much more probable. Whatever the *reasons* may have been, the *results* are not in doubt. Poe was packed off forthwith to West Point. General Scott's influence seems to have been obtained,[356] and through John Allan's partner, Mr. Charles Ellis, a letter was secured from the latter's younger brother, Powhatan Ellis, then United States Senator from Mississippi, recommending Poe to the Secretary of War. As usual, a senator's letter turned the trick with the War Department, and on March 31, 1830, we find Poe's guardian signing this document at Richmond, probably not without extreme satisfaction:

Sir — as the guardian of Edgar Allan Poe I hereby signify my assent to his signing articles by which he shall bind himself to serve the United States for Five years, unless sooner discharged, as stipulated in your official letter appointing him cadet.

Respectfully,
Your obt. — servant.
John Allan

The Hon. Sec'y of War
Washington

The state of affairs at home may be inferred from the fact, that once in the possession of his appointment the new cadet did

356 This is not certain but probable. General Scott had known Poe as a boy; John Allan knew him; a volume of Poe's early poems was afterward found in the General's library; several of Poe's West Point classmates assert that General Scott helped Poe. At a much later date General Scott gave money to a collection taken up to help Poe, etc., etc. Also see letter No. 23, *Valentine Museum Letters* (November 6, 1830).

not linger any longer than he had to. From Mr. Allan's letter it seems clear that Poe received his cadet's warrant at the end of March, 1830. Examinations at West Point were in June, yet by May 12 he was preparing to depart, for on that date John Allan is charged on the books of his firm with a pair of blankets for Poe's outfit, and it seems likely that, about the same time, the young man left Richmond for the United States Military Academy. Mr. Allan accompanied him to the steamboat leaving for Baltimore, and shook hands with him. Poe says that he knew it was meant for a final farewell.[357]

Poe must have arrived in Baltimore about the middle of May, 1830, where he seems to have gone to live temporarily with his Aunt Maria Clemm, as letters from Richmond were afterward addressed to him in care of his brother Henry, who also resided with her. The affection of Mrs. Clemm, and the doubtless spontaneous welcome of little Virginia, no doubt formed a warm contrast to the atmosphere he had just left. The fact that he was about to enter the military profession, presumably for life, did not interfere with his literary aspirations. Poe doubtless had his reservations about the permanence of his career in the army, even then. He must already have been at work on some of the poems which appeared the year following, and he doubtless hoped that by pleasing his guardian and becoming an officer he would solve the problem of existing, and later on be in a position to rely on Mr. Allan's patronage in the work which lay nearest to his heart.

Indeed it is safe to say that from the first, " Cadet Poe " had no enthusiasm for West Point. His two years of army service could leave him no illusions as to what was to come afterward. And the outward glitter, — the uniforms, and the parades — did not have the attraction for him by this time that they do for the average youngster who first encounters them. A long experience on the inside of a military tunic had already proved to him how tight and narrow was the fit. He was now twenty-one years old and capable of estimating his chances for the future.[358] With his

[357] *Valentine Museum Letters,* letter No. 24, page 257.

[358] Some of Poe's biographers make capital of Poe's being over twenty-one

temperament, his literary propensities, and the circumstances under which he entered the Military Academy, it was almost a foregone conclusion that he would not stay long in a place where even determination and military ambition are often not sufficient to produce a diploma. Two years in barracks had already informed him as to the amount of freedom that he could expect, and the discipline at West Point was even stricter. Nevertheless, there was no alternative. John Allan's help was contingent upon his making the most of the opportunity, and there was nothing else to do but to starve. Up until the last, however, Poe continued to further his literary plans, for while in Baltimore on his way to West Point he took the occasion to call on Mr. Nathan C. Brooks of semi-literary character, to whom he read some of his manuscripts and promised to send a poem for an annual that Brooks then had underway. This Poe never did. It seems also that he borrowed some money from a former schoolmate to whom he imparted another version of his legendary adventures abroad.[359]

Poe probably went by way of Philadelphia to New York, and thence to West Point,[360] where he arrived in time to take the examinations for admission during the last week of June, 1829. On June 28, he writes John Allan that the examinations for admission are just over, and adds with a true Virginian *naiveté* that a great many cadets of "good family" have been rejected. Even the son of a governor was found deficient! Mr. Allan's remarks

at the time of his entrance at West Point, and to accuse him of "duplicity." As a matter of fact to this day both at Annapolis and West Point various "dodges are worked" by candidates to circumvent the letter of the law about appointments: mail is sent to establish "legal residence" in other districts than that from where the candidate hails, etc. Poe's age was afterward a joke at West Point. See Chapter XIII, page 274. It is now known that the Secretary of War himself gave Poe assurance that he could call himself twenty-one until his twenty-second birthday. See this chapter, page 249, also *Valentine Museum Letters*, letter No. 15, page 159.

[359] Woodberry, vol. I, 1909, page 67.

[360] This is not certain. It is thought that Poe took the opportunity to call on some literary friends in Philadelphia, as well as upon Carey, Lea & Carey. It may be that he arranged to publish the sonnet *To Science* in the *Casket* while in Philadelphia at this time. The poem appeared a few months later, October, 1830, and L. A. Wilmer is thought to have been connected with the *Casket* and the *Saturday Evening Post* about this time.

upon the Poe family were probably remembered. Doubtless, to the aspirant for social honors in Richmond, the shot went home. Evidently young Poe was somewhat taken aback by the business-like air of the Military Academy for he is careful to impress his guardian, as if in preparation for possible snags ahead, that less than a quarter of those who enter ever graduate. " I will be much pleased," he adds, " if you will answer this letter." He was not quite sure how the wind blew in Richmond, — then, too, during the first few days in uniform, it is strangely comforting to hear from home. On July 1, 1830, Poe took the oath at West Point " to preserve the Constitution of the United States and serve them against all their enemies whomsoever." The next morning, with a veteran's disgust, he found himself being awakened in a tent by the familiar sound of reveille, and donning a cadet's uniform.

About the same time that Cadet Edgar Allan Poe was going through the manual of arms, with astonishing facility for a *plebe,* on the summer parade ground at the United States Military Academy, Mr. Allan was enjoying the hospitality of his friend John Mayo at Belleville Plantation near Richmond, despite a very annoying complication in his private affairs at home. Among the house guests was Miss Louisa Gabriella Patterson (the niece of Mrs. Mayo), a strong-minded lady from New York, about thirty years of age. Mr. Allan was attracted by her; the attentions of the rich widower were well received, and they shortly afterwards became engaged. It was the stroke which severed Poe forever from the home of his youth. He was now finally and irretrievably an exile in a world hostile to dreamers. For a while he tarried as a stranger in the tents of the Military.

CHAPTER XIII
The West Point Interlude

THE not inconsiderable period of his short life which Poe spent at West Point, trying to carry out John Allan's idea of what his career should be, may be considered, for the most part, as a spiritual and mental interlude. It lasted from June 25, 1830, to February 19, 1831,[361] and marked the passing of the days when he made his final decision to cast off all outside dictation and to follow, without further delay or indirection, a literary career. During the periods of drill and recitation his body, and the secondary part of his mind, was marched back and forth on the parade ground or to the classroom, but his spirit and desire were elsewhere.

Upon arrival, in the last week of June, 1830, he seems to have passed the entrance examinations without difficulty, and to have been received by a Captain Hitchcock and a Mr. Ross, to whom he was previously known or bore letters of introduction. On July 1, as we have already seen, he took the oath, and as the custom then was and still is, he immediately went to live under canvas in the annual summer encampment of the cadets. His tent mates were Cadets Read, Stockton from Philadelphia, and Henderson, the last a nephew of the Secretary of War.[362]

Upon arrival at " The Point," Poe had found waiting for him a letter from his guardian which had been forwarded by his brother

361 These dates are deduced from the *Valentine Museum Letters*. Poe arrived at West Point in time to take the entrance examinations, which lasted two days. He probably arrived the day or the afternoon before. On June 28, 1830, he writes John Allan saying the examinations are over. The date of his leaving is from the letter written to John Allan from New York, February 21, 1831, in which he says he left West Point two days before. This for the first time gives Poe's stay at West Point its proper duration.

362 This, and some of the other material not hitherto included in Poe's biographies, has been taken from the *Valentine Museum Letters*, Nos. 22, 23, 24, and 25, all but the last written by Poe from West Point, and all covering the period with interesting new data.

Henry from Baltimore, containing a $20 bill, and a complaint that he had taken some articles from home which did not belong to him. These it appears from his reply were some books from his own room and probably a brass inkstand, sand caster, and pen holder marked with John Allan's name and the year '13.[363] These articles must have been in Poe's possession for years in his own room, some of the books were doubtless the gift of Frances Allan, or his own scant little library. Nothing shows the strong sense of Mr. Allan's overpowering sense of property, and his petty parsimony more than this incident.

Financially Poe's experience at West Point was largely that of the fiasco at Charlottesville. The $20 was evidently to see him through the Military Academy. It, and the pair of blankets which he drew from *Ellis & Allan* in May, were the last evidences of any warmth which he received from his guardian, who now felt that on the generous cadet's salary of $28 a month, and rations, Poe was amply upon his own. It was customary for the parents of cadets to make a deposit for the boys to draw upon, for their instruments, books, clothes, and other incidentals. But this was not done for Poe, although he writes later asking for "instruments and a *Cambridge Mathematics*," but the letter received no reply. Indeed, his guardian did not communicate with him at all between June, 1830, and January, 1831. From the day Poe took the oath, it is quite obvious that John Allan considered and hoped that their intimate association was at an end.

About the year 1830, the Military Academy at West Point consisted of five fairly large stone buildings for administrative purposes, classrooms, and dormitories scattered about the "parade," the heights above the Hudson. There were, in addition, six brick buildings for the officers and professors near the river, and some old military store houses of Revolutionary date for arms and equipment. The original barracks had been burnt some years before Poe's arrival.

In 1830, the Academy was twenty-eight years old and there

[363] As Poe had these with him for years, and at no time *after* the Spring of 1830 had an opportunity of taking any "souvenirs" from the Allan house, it is reasonably certain he brought them from Richmond when he left for West Point. See also Chapter IX, page 130, note 182.



The United States Military Academy

West Point on the Hudson, about 1830

From an old print

Courtesy of the New York Public Library

were some thirty odd professors, instructors, and assistants for a corps of about 250 cadets. First preference in appointment was given by law to the descendants of Revolutionary officers, which accounts for Poe's anxiety in looking up his grandfather's record in Baltimore, — the sons of the officers of 1812 coming next. The legal age for appointees was between fourteen and twenty-one, most of the boys being admitted in the early 'teens, so that Poe was far more mature than the average cadet of his time, both in years and experience.

The course lasted four years, but was by no means so rigidly organized as at present. Under the conditions, Poe's hope of receiving advanced standing owing to his previous military experience and attendance at the University of Virginia, might have possibly have been accorded him had he consistantly distinguished himself. Some of the more advanced cadets were allowed to take part as instructors, for which they received additional pay. A cadet's salary was fixed by law at $330, with certain allowances for rations and permission to purchase equipment at army rates. Text books, and articles of personal use were not provided, however, and Poe soon found himself in debt for necessaries which the parents of the other students either furnished, or provided by deposit. In his final letter from West Point, he complains bitterly of this and of the similar lack of the small necessities of life which John Allan's parsimony had also inflicted upon him at the University of Virginia. To be without soap, candles, writing materials, room furniture, fuel, and clothing; to be forced to borrow even the minor articles for personal cleanliness and comfort, is a situation which is essentially exasperating and degrading. Poe took a peculiar pride in the neatness and care of his person and complains justly of the unnecessary " fatigues and degradations " which he was forced to undergo. The household economy of the time, particularly the Virginia plantation, supplied many of the articles, which are now purchased as a matter of course. In Poe's day it was difficult, sometimes even impossible to buy them at all.[364] Such a situation does not need to be enlarged upon.

[364] Soap, candles, toilet preparations, minor articles of clothing, mattresses, towels, linen of all kinds, and articles of knit and woven ware were made at home

At Charlottesville the story of his birth had undoubtedly somewhat compromised his social position with the sons of Virginia aristocrats. At West Point this condition did not exist, Poe, indeed, seems to have definitely allied himself there with Virginians, who, up until the Civil War, constituted themselves a group apart, — yet the Military Academy was by no means democratic. It had its own peculiar snobbery. This consisted in affecting to look down on one who had served in the ranks. Future officers, and the sons of officers had their own opinion about one who had so far erred as to have been a common soldier. He did not " belong," and his mannerisms, especially since they were marked, were doubly open to suspicion. In Poe's history at West Point this played its part, and helped to make the already bitter, a little salt. To offset this, Poe gave himself out as a young man of many adventures, one who could tell much of strange places if he cared to. Thus the " mystery " was continued.

As for the rest, there was certainly something to be gained:

> The Course of Study is completed in four years, each being devoted to a class; and includes the French language, drawing, natural and experimental philosophy, chemistry, and mineralogy, geography, history, ethics, and national law, mathematics in the highest branches, and lastly artillery and engineering.[365]

The country about the Academy was not without its attractions, had there been any time to enjoy them. The view from West Point down the gorge of the Hudson as far as Horse Race and Anthony's Nose is peculiarly beautiful and was impressed firmly on the young poet's memory. Old Fort Putnam on the hill behind the barracks had at that time the remains of various subterranean chambers, the Catskills, which had already been celebrated by Irving, were nearby, and in the neighborhood of the

for the most part. Not to have these, argued oneself homeless, and a nobody. With no cash to buy these, Poe's condition at Charlottesville and West Point can be imagined. It was one of the things that not only made life unbearable but compromised his social position. A borrower is always a nuisance. Poe had been sent to West Point with a handshake and $20, the rest was silence. He was right in resenting this bitterly.

[365] *The Northern Traveler,* third edition, revised and extended, published by G. & C. Carvill, New York, 1828 (and after). " A reliable guide book and compilation of information for travelers from official sources."

post was Stony Point, the scene of Major André's sad adventure and the treason of General Arnold, in which, as we have seen, Poe might feel himself entitled to take a peculiar interest. But there was no time to wander among the hills as there had been at Charlottesville. A paternal government claimed his time and the intervals of leisure were few. Nevertheless, West Point left its mark, and later appears vaguely in some of Poe's descriptions of New York scenery.

The cadets rose early; breakfasted, we may be sure, frugally; attended lectures; dined; and about four P.M. returned to the barracks to get into uniform for the "parade" or drills which occupied the bulk of the remaining hours of daylight. After supper there was a study period, with call to quarters about nine o'clock and early taps. Leaves were few and far between, with holidays even rarer. Here was scant time for dreaming.

From the West Point period, the beginning of Poe's physical troubles definitely dates.[366] It is reasonably certain that he was of a type which matured early; he probably reached the prime of life before the full strength of manhood in many others began. Despite his early prowess as a swimmer, it is known that he was generally averse to physical exercise and easily fatigued.[367] He had a weak heart and little energy. Any long continued regimen of drill and exercise must have left him morose and unstrung. The conditions at West Point were precisely the worst that he could be called upon to undergo, because the most vigorous, and there was no time at all for escape and solitude. Every incident of his daily routine, and the forced intimacy of tent and barrack life, was an interruption to that stream of consciousness which, to a man of Poe's type, was all in all — the reverie from which he hoped from time to time to snatch something worth preserving.

The ordinarily constituted man, certainly the cadets who surrounded Poe, could never have an inkling of the sense of hopelessness, nervous irritability, and spiritual frustration which comes to the artist as he feels those rare periods when consciousness becomes creative being interrupted by the trivialities of

366 See Poe's own statement, *Valentine Museum Letters,* letter No. 24.
367 Testimony of classmates at the University of Virginia.

petty conversation, the necessity to appear polite, or the call of duty to some ultimately useless task. The result is like losing something out of the mouth while dining. No matter how much is eaten afterward the sense of loss is still there. Six months of this seems to have been sufficient to prostrate Poe and send him into a nervous collapse.[368] A boyhood in the same house with John Allan, followed by a period of wild anxiety, starvation, the loss of his sweetheart, and the death of his " mother " was an excellent preparation. Whether this entitled Poe to sympathy is not the question to be raised, the facts, and their result on the man who was subjected to them, are, however, pertinent matter of inquiry.

The drills, during the summer encampment at West Point, are notoriously severe. It is then that the raw *plebes* are knocked into some kind of form for the coming academic year by the combined efforts of the military instructors, and the officious attentions of the upper classmen known as " hazing," which is as much, and as important a part of the character and life-forming aim of the Military Academy as the text books or the sermons in Chapel.

Poe seems to have escaped some of the attention of the upper classmen by the fact that he had already passed two years in the army, and bore somewhat the character of a veteran. His age, which was several years greater than most of the others, and his evident maturity, seem also to have distinguished him from the rest and to have aided in building up a certain glamor and curiosity about his name and antecedents. He became known for his aloofness and pride, and the joke was circulated that having obtained an appointment for his son who had died, Poe had himself taken the boy's place and entered West Point. It was the dignified " father " whom they now beheld. All this the ex-sergeant major seems to have taken not too good-naturedly while he added to his prestige by indicating that he was a youth with a romantic and thrilling past. Brother Henry's adventures were now liberally drawn upon again for his own account, and to them Poe added certain other items about voyages to the Mediterranean, and experiences while penetrating the mysterious interior

[368] *Valentine Museum Letters,* letter No. 25. Poe from New York to John Allan just after leaving West Point.

of Arabia that probably reflect the sources of his reading for *Israfel,* and the secondary oriental literature which engaged his attention about this time. That anyone could imagine such vivid experiences was probably beyond the literal horizon of his fellow cadets. The aura of the legend which Poe undoubtedly began to build up about himself, even at the University of Virginia, now took on a more definite form, and the stories of his " foreign voyages " were long remembered by his West Point classmates, stories that come to life years later in their reminiscences to confirm the myth for biographers.[369] Even the cold records of the War Department have scarcely been able to destroy their effect. Someone at West Point also heard the story (which Poe had a year before written to John Allan) that the romantic looking cadet was a grandson of Benedict Arnold, and this tale began to be whispered about the corridors of South Barracks. A friend at last made bold to ask Poe himself, and there is good authority for the statement that he would neither deny or affirm it. The truth seems to be that Poe really knew so little about his mother and her antecedents that he was not sure himself. Her maiden name, he knew, had been Arnold, and he knew little more, in addition the tale undoubtedly added a strange, and to him a delightfully diabolic color to his reputation.

Part of this desire for a mysterious notoriety was undoubtedly due to Poe's own feeling of the necessity for padding out his personality in certain directions in which it lacked or had been frustrated, and for making a frame for the strange face in the portrait of himself, that he early set about painting. Both the frame and the countenance that looked out from it were largely artificial, but they were nevertheless works of art. A delight in gulling the simplicity of those about him, a belief in their simplicity which begot in him a dangerous sense of superiority and contempt, was also present. As he grew older this sense of superiority became more and more necessary to his own thought to offset the sense of weakness that came to afflict him, as he began to disintegrate physically and psychically. The romantic hero

369 Allan B. Magruder, a classmate of Poe, to Prof. George E. Woodberry April 23, 1884. See Woodberry, 1909, vol. I, page 70.

was the first to appear, only to be replaced later by the perfect logician.

It would have been an excellent thing for the young gentleman adventurer known as Cadet Edgar Allan Poe, whose critical intellect had already freed him from the narrow enthusiasm of patriotism, and unmasked for him the empty banality behind the brassy glitter of military life, if, at this period of his existence, he could have been removed by some miracle to an environment where he might have listened to and taken part in the debates and conversation of his superiors and equals. As it was, there was no one about him with whom he could talk. The personnel at the Academy, while he was there, seems to have been without exception of the completely usual stamp. No one of his classmates had any mental ambitions, and none of them ever achieved any distinction beyond that of brevet-general or pastor *emeritus* of an evangelical church. To them, Poe's babel of critical remarks about poets and philosophers of whom they had never heard before, and seldom heard mentioned again in the warlike or peaceful events of their hide-bound lives, must have been incomprehensible and suspect.

The truth is that, even at the age of twenty-two, Poe had few contemporaries in the United States.[370] There were a few circles in Boston, New York or Philadelphia where his remarks might have found an audience. Baltimore was later on to provide another. For the rest, the old tradition of classical culture was fast disappearing along with the old generation which had founded the "Republic." The new Jacksonian "Democracy" was already climbing into the saddle, the frontier democracy, which the followers of Jefferson mistakenly took for their own. It was no longer fashionable to be a "gentleman," or to know anything. The tide of romanticism and secondary German philosophy, which Longfellow and Emerson were later on to introduce in America, had not yet begun to be mentioned. So far Poe had spoken in an

[370] It must be remembered that Poe's environment, even in Richmond, was largely Scotch; his primary education was founded in English schools, and his reading had been largely in the English periodicals found at *Ellis & Allan*. At the University of Virginia he had come across the rare Germanic influence then scarcely known in this country. Poe read French, Italian, and Latin.

atmosphere so rarified that it could not produce even an echo. At West Point the vacuum was complete.

American history has produced no more ludicrous paradox than this young literary genius shut up in an institution which was then, and for some years later, partly given up to educating and providing the military technique for many of those who were later on to use the knowledge they had so gained in trying to destroy the nation which provided the means for so doing. The world in which Poe moved had nothing to do with all this. The sectionalism which was even then beginning to divide the nation, the controversy over slavery, the awakening of industrialism, and the muling and pewking of the young democracy, even then beginning to strike out against all those who raised their heads above its level of thought or morals, did not exist for him. His world lay in the realms of thought, criticism, and the philosophy of European molding which he had first found in the pages of the English reviews upon the counters in the book loft at *Ellis & Allan*. Here he had met the young Macaulay, and "Christopher North," become interested in Shelley, Keats, and Byron, Wordsworth, and the giant Coleridge, and it was with them that he thought, and out of them that he moved forth armed with a genuine comment on the philosophy of the time and the only lasting creative urge in romantic poetry that the United States produced. Longfellow and Emerson translated, remolded, and explained, but Poe took the data of romanticism and out of it created something new, a unique utterance in poetry, and a critical comment and application of philosophy to his time and environment that is only now beginning to become appreciated.[371] His art in prose and verse has already won its cloud-streaked place in the sun. In the scattered leaves of his critical and philosophical comments lie some of the earliest suggestions of the possible results of science upon the world and the spirit of man, doubts as

[371] This "comment" is scattered and sometimes dulled by Poe's aping of greater knowledge than he possessed, and carelessness about facts, but it is there, nevertheless, in his criticism, his stories, and in *Eureka*. Lowell said, "As it is, he has squared out blocks enough to build an enduring pyramid, but left them lying careless and unclaimed in many different quarries." J. R. Lowell in *Graham's Magazine*, 1845, vol. XXVII, no. 2, page 50.

to the ultimate self-sufficiency of democracy, queries as to the human value of a society which made physical comfort its goal, strange philanderings in psychology, and in the mathematics of astronomy.

As yet it was all very vague and youthfully crude, yet it was there, in embryo, in the young man in a swallow tail coat and bowler shako, who was being marched back and forth on the hot August parade ground at West Point, learning the precise angle at which the rifle must be held at "port arms," and how to salute the flag which did not represent anything that he really cared very much about, and a great deal that was positively distasteful to him. For this performance he received three meals and about ninety cents a day. The strange result was that, in spite of it, he evolved from Coleridge and others his own critical theory of poetry and somehow, somewhere, continued to write poetry, poetry which did not view the change which even then he saw creeping across the machineless world into which he had been born with the undivided enthusiasm of most of his contemporaries.[372] In the *Philadelphia Casket* for October, 1830, appeared reprinted from the 1829 volume the young West Point cadet's

SONNET — TO SCIENCE

Science! true daughter of Old Time thou art!
Who alterest all things with thy peering eyes.
Why preyest thou thus upon the poet's heart,
Vulture, whose wings are dull realities?
How should he love thee? or how deem thee wise,
Who wouldst not leave him in his wandering
To seek for treasure in the jewelléd skies,
Albeit he soared with an undaunted wing?
Hast thou not dragged Diana from her car?
And driven the Hamadryad from the wood
To seek a shelter in some happier star?
Hast thou not torn the Naiad from her flood,
The Elfin from the green grass, and from me
The summer dream beneath the tamarind tree?

[372] The cocksure optimism of Victorianism is utterly lacking in Poe. He was one of the few to see the implications of harm in the age of machinery just

In the meantime, General Scott had visited West Point on a tour of inspection, probably, about the end of the summer encampment, and was, so Poe tells his guardian in a letter written home that Fall, most cordial in his attentions to the young Virginian.[373] General Scott was probably more than casually interested, for John Allan was by that time engaged to a lady who was one of his relations.

The Summer of 1830, indeed, had been a crucial one in the changes which it brought about in Poe's relations with John Allan, and any projects which he may have had for the future favors of his guardian. None of Poe's letters home had been answered. Mr. Allan was summering on his *Lower Byrd* Plantation in Goochland, and passing the time most pleasantly in courting the lady of his choice at Mr. Mayo's on Belvedere. Poe no doubt heard of the turn which affairs had taken through the visit of some Virginian friends to West Point, Mr. Chevalier and Mr. Cunningham.[373] He could not help being much interested for he must have realized that in a very real sense he had interests at stake. The possibility of a legitimate heir would undoubtedly greatly weaken the already slender claim which he might still feel he had upon the favor and affection of John Allan. On October 5, 1830, Mr. Allan was married in the Patterson house in New York to his second wife, the wedding being attended by the Galts and other Richmond friends and relatives. The happy pair returned to live in Richmond. Poe tells his " father " that he had hoped to have a visit from him at " The Point," as the other boys were visited by their relatives, but such an event was probably the last idea in John Allan's mind.[373] With the new wife, both the dark and the bright memories of the first were swept away. John Allan had confessed the faults and the results of former indiscretions to his new partner before his marriage,[374] he had been accepted in spite of them, and naturally

coming into its own. His chief quarrel with it, was that it destroyed beauty and leisure. As a Virginian and an egoist Poe despised mobocracy and a Santa Claus view of science; as an artist he depicted the ugliness of industrialism. See *The Elk.*

[373] *Valentine Museum Letters,* letter No. 23.

[374] John Allan in his will made at Richmond, Virginia, April 17, 1832. See the copy of John Allan's will, Appendix III.

enough he did not care to renew the past, or the possibility of future complications by even a mention of Poe. He belonged to the realm of Frances Allan, and that world, for the good merchant, now enjoying an Indian Summer of youth, had completely passed away. To the new wife, Edgar Allan Poe was a name, the son of actors and a scribbler; to her husband a troublesome memory. It was hard, almost impossible for Poe to believe this. He still continued to write " affectionately " to " Dear Pa." But there was no answer.

At the end of the Summer the battalion of cadets moved into their winter quarters. Poe's room, which he shared with two others, was Number 28 of the old South Barracks, and here the final phase of Israfel in brass buttons dragged its way to an abrupt end through the Fall and Winter of 1830–31.

Number 28 was furnished, as were all the rooms in the barracks, with a more than Spartan simplicity. There were three beds, perhaps as many chairs, and a table shared in common by the inmates. A wardrobe for each, contained their equipment and clothes, for which a precise position was indicated by the regulations. No ornaments or pictures were tolerated, but as a special concession, certain *lares* might be " displayed," upon the upper shelf of the cupboard. A broom, a few basins, slop tubs, and pitchers completed the domestic scene of a cadet's background, to which an open fire, if the room was fortunate enough to abut on a chimney flue, and a few candlesticks, contributed the sole touches of warmth and light. Compared with this, Number 13 " Rowdy Row " at the University of Virginia had been a luxurious apartment and a haven of private refuge. To the usual assortment of textbooks, Poe somehow or other had contrived to add some genuine literature. These works of imagination consumed by far the larger portion of his study hours as well as his spare time. Even a drill or formation was insufficient at times to interrupt a favorite passage, yet, despite this, until he deliberately set out to neglect his studies, he stood high in his classes at the end of the semi-annual examination: third in French, and seventeenth in mathematics, in a class of eighty-seven.

There is a studied confusion about the incessant routine of a

military academy that no haphazard method of existence can hope to equal. The method itself is beyond approach for producing a continuous series of events that perpetually threaten to make everyone late to something. As a consequence, the unfortunate young gentlemen subjected to the process are forever rushing about changing clothes or books, dashing up and down stairs, arising, going to bed, winding themselves in long sashes, buckling on swords, answering oral orders bawled through the long corridors, or stampeding off to formations and yelping " here " to their names at roll call thousands of times. The method of existence is so complicated that living is impossible.

The life of the inmates of Number 28 was further made more interesting, if less tolerable, by the visits at both stated and unexpected hours of the various officers of military and academic discipline who were charged with enforcing the list of thirty-three disciplinary " don'ts," each with its ingenious penalty; or by the intrusions of upper classmen who were tacitly licensed by the traditions of the place to inflict the peculiarly exasperating personal annoyances of the code of hazing at any hour of the day or night. The blare of bugles and the crash of drums announced the beginning and close of the various and numerous periods into which the day was divided, a schedule which took no account of the value of leisure. There was literally no provision at all for privacy in barracks, and the cadets ate together in a large mess hall under the eyes of the officers. The hours of leave were so short as to preclude any trips into the country about, and if they had not been, there would have been no place to go. The observances of the ritual of rank and military restrictions, made visits to the married quarters of the officers uncomfortable when they were possible.

West Point was, at that time, remote from all places of any size and the visits of relatives and parents were perforce laborious, brief, and far between. In short, there was no social life at all. The only relief to the bareness and monotony of the place seems to have been a combination store and illicit groggery run by " Old Benny Haven," who exchanged various petty, luxurious tidbits, and bottles of brandy for the small change of the cadets,

when they had any, and lacking that, conducted a usurious form of barter in the clothes, blankets, equipment, and even the soap and candles of the young gentlemen. His place just off the post, was, of course, out of bounds, and, although frequently visited by the officers for convivial refreshment, was at once the only solace and the main cause of trouble for the cadets. In addition to Old Benny's place, as often happens about military posts, the Commissary seems to have provided a loafing place at odd times. Here Poe became acquainted with the Commissary Clerk, at that time one J. Augustus Shea, who it seems had some literary propensities as he afterward published poems. Little George Shea, the clerk's son, then a small child running about the grounds, was afterward recalled by Poe. Both father and son heard the poet deliver *The Raven* in New York fifteen years later when he was at the crest of his fame, and had renewed the old West Point intimacy.[669] In such surroundings the young Poe, who loved to imagine himself in luxurious and semi-oriental apartments, surrounded by sweeping draperies, a gloomy, religious light, and tripods of incense, found himself " at home."

Number 28 South Barracks early attained the reputation of being a " hard " room. Those who aspired to a minimum of appearances on the rolls of discipline soon learned to avoid its precincts. From it, from time to time, issued pasquinades and diatribes in rhyme upon the officers and faculty which were clever enough both to amuse and to annoy. Lieutenant Joseph Locke of Savannah appears to have distinguished himself as a merciless enforcer of discipline, and his doubtless too frequent visits to Number 28 were soon celebrated by the pen which has alone preserved him to fame:

> As for Locke, he is all in my eye,
> May the devil right soon for his soul call,
> He never was known to lie —
> In bed at a reveillé " roll call."
>
> John Locke was a notable name;
> Joe Locke is a greater; in short,
> The former was well known to fame,
> But the latter's well known " to report."

Even Colonel Thayer, the Superintendent did not escape, although Poe seems to have found in him one of the few men he could admire while at the Military Academy.

Cadet T. H. Gibson was Poe's roommate, and from him, although he set down his memories many years later, we are indebted for what is probably the most authentic picture of " Cadet Poe ":[375]

. . . The first conversation I had with Poe after we became installed as room-mates was characteristic of the man. A volume of Campbell's *Poems* was lying upon our table, and he tossed it contemptuously aside with the curt remark: ' Campbell is a plagiarist '; then without waiting for a reply he picked up the book, and turned the leaves over rapidly until he found the passage he was looking for.

' There,' he said, ' is a line more often quoted than any other passage of his: " Like angel visits few and far between," and he stole it bodily from Blair's *Grave*. Not satisfied with the theft he has spoiled it in the effort to disguise it. Blair wrote: " Like angel visits *short* and far between," Campbell's " Few and far between " is mere tautology.'

Poe at that time, though only twenty years of age,[376] had the appearance of being much older. He had a worn, weary discontented look, not easily forgotten by those who were intimate with him. Poe was easily fretted by any jest at his expense. . . . Very early in his brief career at the Point he established a high reputation for genius, and poems and squibs of local interest were daily issued from Number 28 and went the round of the classes. . . .

The studies of the Academy, Poe utterly ignored. I doubt if he ever studied a page of Lacroix, unless it was to glance hastily over it in the lecture room, while others of his section were reciting. It was evident from the first that he had no intention of going through with the course, and both Professors and Cadets of the older classes had him set down for a *January Colt* before the corps had been in barracks a week.

From a letter written to John Allan before he entered the Military Academy, it is evident that Poe counted confidently upon his former army experience and his preparation at the University of Virginia to get him through the course at West Point in short order. He tells his guardian that he hoped to complete it in six months. It is probable that he found it, from the

[375] *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, November, 1867.

[376] He was actually twenty-two, but had given his age in the records at West Point as nineteen years and some months.

nature of the arrangement of the curriculum, rather than from the difficulty of the subjects themselves, impossible to carry out the prediction. This miscalculation of the results of his abilities, combined with the prospect of the increased length of stay at West Point which it involved, and the growing distaste for the bare existence he found there, probably accounts for the discontented and haggard look which his roommate recalled over thirty years later. In the army itself Poe had found means to escape much of the physical drudgery of drills, and the way to considerable leisure for his dreams and composition by engaging in the clerical work which conferred such privileges. At West Point there was no way of avoiding the ironclad routine, and the young poet found himself bound, and turning ceaselessly upon a wheel where the torture became more irksome with each revolution. To look forward to an endless life of that kind of thing was not to be contemplated without despair. Indeed, it is probable that even the unexpected lengthening of its temporary continuance was more than he cared to face, and that he had, as his roommate seems to think, made up his mind to shake the dust of the place from his feet as early as the Fall of 1830. In addition there was the change in the affairs of John Allan which probably removed from Poe the last incentive to continue the situation.

Mr. Allan's marriage had interfered sadly with these hopes. That it made Poe uneasy there can be no doubt. It was for that reason that he wrote John Allan in November that he regretted that his guardian had not felt it worth while to come up from New York to pay him a visit, although a sight of the man who had so often reviled and reproached him, could have brought little satisfaction. Doubtless there was some element of affection due to memories of old and happier times, but these were now remote. Nevertheless, Mr. Allan's indifference, and the fact that he had ignored Poe, was alarming, so the November letter to Richmond may be regarded as a " feeler-out." Poe tells his guardian that he has found West Point not unpleasant and that he is at that time (November 6, 1830) standing first in all his sections.

The roommate's inference and recollection that Poe neglected his classes, probably arises from composite memories set down

years later. That Poe was on the whole discontented and nervous, there is every reason to believe to be correct.

Poe's standing academically, however, was not much affected. He probably did not have to study much; he was brilliant; had an excellent preparation, and seems to have found no difficulty in distinguishing himself in languages and mathematics. When he did decide to go, as he did, it was not by the route of failure in the classroom, but by disregarding the rules of discipline. For a little while he was not sure enough of the actual state of affairs in Richmond to cut the last tie which bound him to his past without some further thought.

This was probably the condition of his affairs, an uneasy condition, through the Fall and early Winter of 1830. It was a state of spiritual limbo that must have been particularly trying. Nevertheless, he was not quite ready to take so irrevocable a step on his own initiative. Nor can we blame him, for by this time he knew full well what it meant to starve. Even *he* could not afford to be independent on nothing at all. Byron, and not Chatterton was his model.

During this interlude he again began to drink. As nearly always just a little; but that little for him was a great deal too much. It probably helped to deplete his nerves already badly strained. Having experienced the effects of gulping, he now took to sipping. The stories as to his being raving drunk in the guard house are not true. Had they been so, he would not have been under the necessity of deliberately neglecting his duty to procure his release. There was, however, it seems often enough a bottle of brandy present in Number 28, occasionally resorted to in company with such friends as its contents and the inspired conversation of the owner might attract. About the time of the letter home, Poe's roommate again pulls aside the curtain for a brief glimpse at Number 28:

> It was a dark, cold, drizzling night, in the last days of November, when this event came off. The brandy bottle had been empty for two days, and just at dusk Poe proposed that we should draw straws — the one who drew the shortest to go down to Old Benny's and replenish our stock. The straws were drawn, and the lot fell on me.

Provided with four pounds of candles, and Poe's last blanket, for traffic (silver and gold had we none, but such as we had we gave unto Benny), I started just as the bugle sounded 'to quarters.' It was a rough road to travel, but I knew every foot of it by night or day, and reached my place of destination in safety, but drenched to the skin. Old Benny was not in the best of humors that evening. Candles and blankets and regulation shoes, and similar articles of traffic, had accumulated largely on his hands, and the market for them was dull in that neighborhood. His chicken suppers and bottles of brandy had disappeared very rapidly of late, and he had received little, or no money in return.

At last, however, I succeeded in exchanging the candles and blankets for a bottle of brandy, and the hardest-featured, loudest-voiced old gander that it has been my lot to encounter. To chop the bird's head off before venturing into barracks with him was a matter of pure necessity; and thus, in fact, Old Benny rendered him before delivery. I reached the suburbs of the barracks about nine o'clock. The bottle had not as much brandy in it as when I left Old Benny's, but I was very confident I had not spilled any. I had carried the gander first over one shoulder and then over the other, and the consequence was that not only my shirt front, but my face and hands were as bloody as the entire contents of the old gander's veins and arteries could make them.

Poe was on the lookout and met me some distance from the barracks, and my appearance at once inspired him with the idea of a grand hoax.[377] Our plans were perfected in an instant. The gander was tied, neck and feet and wings together, and the bloody feathers bristling in every direction gave it a nondescript appearance that would have defied recognition as a gander by the most astute naturalist on the continent. Poe took charge of the bottle, and preceded me to the room. 'Old P.' was puzzling his brains over the binomial theorem, and a visitor from the North Barracks was in the room awaiting the result of my expedition.

Poe had taken his seat, and pretended to be absorbed in the mysteries of *Leçons Françaises*. Laying the gander down outside the door, I walked or rather staggered into the room, pretending to be very drunk, and exhibiting in clothes and face a spectacle not often seen off the stage. 'My God! what has happened?' exclaimed Poe, with well-acted horror.

'Old K — old K —!' I repeated several times, and with gestures intended to be frantically savage.

[377] Poe's ceaseless desire to perpetrate hoaxes was not due solely to a sense of humor. The feeling of superiority which it conferred on him as the person who stood behind the curtain, was the main motive. This is frequently one of the minor manifestations of an exaggerated ego.

'Well, what of him?' asked Poe.

'He won't stop me on the road any more' — and I produced a large knife that we had stained with the few drops of blood, that remained in the old gander. 'I have killed him!'

'Nonsense!' said Poe, 'you are only trying one of your tricks on us.'

'I didn't suppose you would believe me,' I replied, 'so I cut off his head and brought it into barracks. Here it is!' — and walking out of the door I caught the gander by the legs, and giving it one fearful swing around my head dashed it at the only candle in the room, and left them all in darkness with what two of them believed to be the head of one of the professors. The visitor leaped through the window and alighted in the slop tub, and made fast time for his own room in the North Barracks, spreading, as he went, the report that I had killed old K—, and that his head was there in number 28. The story gained credence, and for a time the excitement in barracks ran high. When we lit the candle again, "Old P." was sitting in one corner, a blank picture [378] of horror, and it was some time before we could restore him to reason.

So the barracks were able to credit even murder to the discontented occupant of Number 28. A strange fellow after all! There was something about him one could not understand. Almost anything might be suspected of one who actually dared to be different — and was proud of it. "Benedict Arnold's grandson!" Interesting no doubt, but dangerous. And so he continued here, as elsewhere, lonely; sad that he was set apart, and yet proud of it. It was this combination of pride, loneliness, and homesickness — the necessity of expressing his sense of malaise, and the desire for the comfort that nothing but dreams could bring him, which seems to have memorably combined at West Point and to have projected itself for the first time into great poems.

One can imagine him, after taps, waiting for the roommates to drift off into the dreamless sleep which was so often denied him by their mutterings, and by the beating at the bars of the restless wings of his own spirit, — one can imagine him getting up in the bare, cold room, and by the light of a carefully shaded candle, setting down the proud words of *Israfel.* How could they know, these heavy sleepers, those solemn memorizers of the

[378] "Old P." was the other roommate, it appears. See the apocryphal, for the most part reminiscences of Timothy Pickering Jones, "Poe and I were classmates, roommates, and tent mates." *New York Sun,* May 10, 1903.

banalities of textbooks — that in their midst, brooding over them in the long hours of the night, sat a spirit whose song was sweeter and clearer than that of the archangels of God! How human and earthy, and how comforting to his own feelings it was, to imagine that even in heaven his voice would be heard above all others, and be found more acceptable. Out of this gigantic and almost insane pride of heart welled up the lines of the poem ending at last in the majestic pæan:

> If I could dwell
> Where Israfel
> Hath dwelt, and he where I,
> He might not sing so wildly well
> A mortal melody
> While a bolder note than this might swell
> From my lyre within the sky.[379]

It was to Richmond, and the happier early days with Frances Allan and the friends of childhood, that he returned in homesick reveries, for homesick he was. Poe was one of those sensitive natures to which the incidents of existence were often painful. Ensconced in the old and familiar, this feeling was lulled; bleak and new surroundings became, by contrast, unbearable and served to make the past a heaven by contrast. Besides, his own intense consciousness of self, a consciousness so supreme as to render the outside world pale and remote, was of the type which tends to extend much of its self-love to the places where it has dwelt, so that a town, a room, or even a tree that has been a refuge becomes romantic and important, as do all things that have been pleasantly familiar in the past.

All this seemed true now of Richmond; the houses, the fields, the river, the ghostly figures that walked in the past of his boyhood, moved in a golden and vernal landscape, with something sacred about it, — a shrine, a green isle in the sea. Oh, the lost loved faces! the silent tones of voices! the dear, dear past forever wild with all regret! It was the only time when he had been happy, at one with himself, and beloved. This is the grand nos-

[379] The last verse of *Israfel* is quoted here as given in the 1845 version. The 1831 text shows numerous variations.

talgia, the immortal regret, the famished yearning out of which so often springs great poetry. It was the only thing that comforted him, the idealized images of the past, witness:

> Helen, thy beauty is to me
> Like those Nicean banks of yore
> That gently, o'er a perfumed sea,
> The weary, way-worn wanderer bore
> *To his own native shore . . .*

and the lines written some years later to Sarah

> When melancholy and alone,
> I sit on some moss-covered stone
> Beside a murm'ring stream;
> I think I hear thy voice's sound
> In every tuneful thing around,
> Oh! what a pleasant dream —

and Poe's dreams of the past were so vivid that he heard voices of the dead and lost speaking; not only the eye but the ear also had its memories:

> The bowers whereat, in dreams, I see
> The wantonest singing birds,
> Are lips — and all thy melody
> Of lip-begotten words.

Amid this longing for the past, in the presence of an always unbearable present, his spirit constantly stood —

> A voice from out the Future cries,
> "On! on!" — but o'er the Past
> (Dim gulf) my spirit lies
> Mute, motionless, aghast!

And it was into this gulf, which he so brooded upon during the long hours of the night, while the rest of the inmates of the barracks slumbered around him, that Poe let down the leaky bucket of inspiration and drew forth *To Helen, The Sleeper, The Pœan, Fairy Land,* and *The Valley of Unrest,* that most beautiful of all his reveries. These poems are rich with the dark jewels of

sorrow, the dim northern twilight of Scotland and the Celtic folk tales he heard from the old people at Irvine, the mystic landscapes of Carolina, and the exotic compound of his "oriental" readings best exemplified, perhaps, by *The City in the Sea.* These he felt were worth preserving and adding to his already published verses. Before he left West Point he had made arrangements to do so.

The new manuscript collection, which included the poems published in Baltimore, and the new ones written at Mrs. Clemm's, in Richmond, or at the Military Academy, he seems to have submitted to Colonel Thayer, who approved of them, and granted permission to allow the members of the cadet corps to subscribe towards their publication at seventy-five cents a copy (*sic*), the amount to be deducted from their pay. This permission, and Colonel Thayer's probable appreciation of Poe's work, expressed perhaps in some personal interview, seem to account for the young man's admiration for that officer, the only personal enthusiasm of which we have any mention during the West Point interlude. Possessed of a guaranteed sale in advance of several hundred copies — nearly everyone seems to have subscribed — Poe wrote to Elam Bliss, a New York publisher, who, it seems, came personally to West Point, sometime about the end of 1830, and made arrangements with the young author to bring out the volume.

The enthusiasm for it among the cadets was by no means literary. They had no idea of the real nature of the book to which they subscribed, but undoubtedly thought it would contain a collection of the humorous verse satirizing the officers and the faculty, which had from time to time proceeded from the strange but clever fellow who inhabited Number 28. Poe on his part undoubtedly knew this, but he used the opportunity to get out his book, probably knowing full well that he would not be present to receive the personal expressions of disgust and disappointment, when its real nature became known. Some of the pearls, as the preface to the book shows, were intended to be cast where they might be audibly appreciated, — as for the grunts of disapproval from the ostensible audience, Poe would neither hear nor care. The important thing was, that a new book was underway. Mr.

Bliss, or his agent, returned to New York with the manuscript ready for the printer, and with little or no effort the cost of the forthcoming volume was guaranteed.

How long Poe would have lingered at West Point doing "fours right" and "shoulder arms," it is hard to tell. His decision to depart was undoubtedly hastened by an event in Richmond that, as the future proved, removed him from all prospects of any immediate or death-bed generosity which John Allan might fondly be hoped to display. The event was unexpected and uncomfortably disconcerting.

Sergeant Graves, "Bully," had evidently waited up until about the end of the year (1830) in hopes that the money owed him, about which Poe had written so reassuringly the previous May, might be forthcoming. By that time the patience of the soldier who was still at Fortress Monroe, was exhausted, and he wrote to John Allan himself in no uncertain terms, demanding that the matter should be settled at once. As Poe had informed this soldier that Mr. Allan was seldom sober, the nature of the information which he possessed must have insured the prompt payment of his demand. It would never do, for a newly married man in Mr. Allan's situation, to have allowed a common soldier to go about with a letter from his adopted "son" which plainly made such damaging assertions. In the concise words of the second wife "Mr. Allan sent him the money . . . and banished Poe from his affections." That much, at least, of the good lady's explanation seems to be literally true. The rest of her statements may well have been the convenient interpretation which, out of self-defense, her husband was forced to put upon it. No one can blame John Allan, in this instance, at least, for being outraged. The fact that Poe had never meant the letter to come home to roost, does not excuse his lack of loyalty in writing it. It is impossible to at once claim the benefits of intimate association, and to violate its confidences. Sergeant "Bully" Graves of the First United States Artillery had, by reason of the writings which he possessed, fallen heir to the only financial "legacy" that the Galt-Allan fortune was to contribute to the name of Edgar Allan Poe! An unfortunately flourishing signature of that young gentleman adorned the

bottom of the fatal letter. Not only the cat, but all expectation of kittens, was now let out of the well-known bag.

Mr. Allan wrote Poe a furious letter, which must have been a masterpiece of invective. It reached Poe just in time to wish him a happy New Year for 1830. He was informed that he was disowned and that no further communications from him were desired. On January 3, 1830, Poe replied in what is probably the most literally autobiographical letter that he ever wrote.[380]

The mask that the sense of favors to come, or the lingering traces of real affection which Poe may have still retained — the necesssity for patience and dissimulation that these had enforced in previous letters to his guardian, were now removed. With nothing to be lost by open defiance, he spits back the bitter truth.

The letter to " Bully " is acknowledged and the charge of Mr. Allan's drinking reaffirmed. The truth, he says, he leaves to God, and John Allan's conscience. The rest of the letter is given up to a multitude of reproaches, which, even when every allowance is made, still remain as a tremendous indictment of the character of John Allan. The parsimony so fatal at Charlottesville had also done its sharp work at West Point, but, above all, Poe in effect reproaches his guardian for his lack of affection and tells him that it was only Frances Allan who cared for him as for her own child. " If she had not died while I was away, there would have been nothing to regret."

Perhaps, the most significant sentences of all, in this burning letter, are those in which Poe speaks of his own health. Despite the undoubted presence of some self pity, there is a hopeless truth in his statements that he knows he will not live long — " Thank God! " — and that his future will be one of indigence and sickness. He says, and this statement seems to be especially significant, that he has no energy nor health left, and he complains of the fatigues of " this place " — fatigues which his absolute want of necessities had subjected him to. The letter concludes with the announcement that he intends to resign. If the permission is not granted from home, he curtly informs John Allan that

[380] *Valentine Museum Letters*, letter No. 24. The Allan-Poe controversy cannot be understood thoroughly without a knowledge of this letter.

from the date of the letter he will neglect his studies and duties. Should the permission not be forthcoming he will leave West Point in ten days. Otherwise says he, " I should subject myself to being dismissed." Poe's resolution was evidently made while he was reading John Allan's letter. The careful phrasing of the indignant reply evidently occupied a day or so in which the exact course to be pursued was turned over in Poe's mind most carefully. This letter to John Allan begun on the third of January, 1831, was not mailed till the fifth. A few days later in Richmond John Allan himself endorsed upon it:

> I rec'd this on the 10th and did not from its conclusion deem it necessary to reply. I made this note on the 13th and can see no good Reason to alter my opinion. I do not think the boy has one good quality. He may do or act as he pleases tho' I would have saved him but on his own terms and conditions since I cannot believe a word he writes. His letter is the most bare-faced one-sided statement.

A careful comparison of dates in the case of this letter may serve to make clear exactly what happened. Poe's last letter from West Point was begun on the third, mailed on the fifth (postmark), and received by Mr. Allan on the tenth of January. John Allan then considered his decision about it for three days before making his endorsement on the thirteenth. *But the court-martial records show that after January seventh Edgar Allan Poe ceased to function as a cadet at West Point.* In other words, he did not *wait* to hear from Mr. Allan, for, before the letter got to Richmond, Poe was already " on strike."

There were, in reality, only two parties in this passage at arms. Between the granite-like obstinacy of John Allan and the final, nervous explosion of Poe's indignation, West Point was a mere incident. If Mr. Allan's consent to a resignation had been obtained, Poe would have profited to the extent of the traveling expenses which he needed — and that would have been all. Mr. Allan's guardianship was at an end. The letter of January 3, 1831, to Richmond was the young poet's moral Declaration of Independence.

There was, indeed, a much deeper cause for the declaration than has heretofore been suspected. A comparison of certain pas-

sages in John Allan's will with the date of Poe's letter to Sergeant Graves ("Bully"), and the mention of the quarrel between "father" and "son" on the same date ("... The time was within half an hour after you had embittered every feeling of my heart against you by your abuse of my *family,* and myself, under your own roof — and at a time when you knew that my heart was almost breaking . . .") gives rise to some pertinent speculations.

Why had Mr. Allan been drinking about this time; why did he quarrel with Poe; and above all, why did he abuse Edgar's *family?* Poe underscores the word *family,* and it can scarcely refer to anything else but the sore point about Mrs. Poe and Rosalie.[381] Nothing would be more likely to drive the foster-son out of the house immediately. But why drive him out, why! What *was* the motive? One sentence from John Allan's will illuminates all these old letters, like switching on a light in a dark room full of musty documents:

> The twins were born some time about the first of July 1830.

They were illegitimate. No wonder Mr. Allan was then "seldom sober." That was why he was frantic with anxiety to get Edgar out of the house when he did return to Richmond in 1830, and why he kept urging and urging Poe to get his appointment and even tried to hurry the War Department. The appointment came in March; but Poe did not leave. On May 6 Mr. Allan picked a violent quarrel with his ward, the old calumny against Edgar's mother was revived as a desperate but sure expedient to get rid of him — "under your own roof — at a time when you knew my heart was almost breaking."[355] A few days later Poe drew the blankets from *Ellis & Allan,* and left via Baltimore. "When I parted from you at the steamboat, I knew that I should never see you again." The same day that Poe took the oath at West Point, the twins were born in Richmond.

[381] Mr. Allan would scarcely "abuse" Mrs. Clemm or Edgar's paralyzed grandmother. The Poe cousins were not known to him personally. Henry *might* have come in for a tongue lashing, but all the probability here points to Edgar's parents, "my family, and myself." He may have included Mosher Poe in his remarks.

So it was not so very simple after all! Like all important and long enduring human relationships it was very, very complex. John Allan and Edgar Poe loved each other. In the inmost realm of the spirit they were father and son. Time and fate had made them so. That is the only satisfactory explanation of the enormous agitation behind their correspondence; the reason, why, in spite of all, they could never quite break it off. Even on the last West Point letter, the older man endorses: "He may do or act as he pleases tho' I would have saved him *but on his own terms. . . .*" In the last analysis it was John Allan's sensuousness and obstinacy that ruined the two finest associations of his remarkable life. It killed Frances Allan, and it blasted Poe. The strange, Scotch parsimony was only a concomitant. Even after his second marriage the revelation of "Bully's" letter was a sore blow. The raveled thread was snapped; Poe left West Point, and went into a nervous collapse. If this was not tragedy, the word to describe it has not been coined.

The process of cutting the bonds of military discipline was more protracted than Poe surmised. Mr. Allan's consent was not forthcoming, so the young man had to set about it the next way. The manner was simple enough; it consisted in taking the path of least resistance. After the receipt of the letter from Richmond, Poe simply gave up. Although the plan was deliberate, it also bears out his own testimony that he was too physically ill to go on. From January 7, 1831, he absented himself from all military formations, recitations, and from church, — and he disobeyed the orders of his superiors when he was directed to take part. The prime military virtue of obedience was thus hopelessly insulted, beyond that there was no "moral offence" involved. The story that he deserted either from the Army proper or from the Military Academy, is a legend which it is scarcely necessary to deny.

On January 5, 1831, it appears that a court-martial under the presidency of Lieutenant Leslie of the Engineers was convened at West Point to try several cadets for offences against discipline. For some reason the sittings of the court were postponed until January 28. During the two weeks prior to that event there were

scarcely any duties which Cadet Poe did not ingeniously manage to neglect. As a consequence after disposing of some other cases —[382]

The Court next proceeded to the trial of Cadet E. A. Poe of the U. S. Military Academy on the following charges and specifications: —

CHARGE 1st — Gross Neglect of Duty

Specification 1st — In this, that he, the said Cadet Poe, did absent himself from the following parades and roll calls between the 7th January and 27th January 1831. . . .

Specification 2nd — In this, that he, the said Cadet E. A. Poe, did absent himself from all Academical duties between the 15th and 27th January 1831. . . .

CHARGE 2nd — Disobedience of Orders

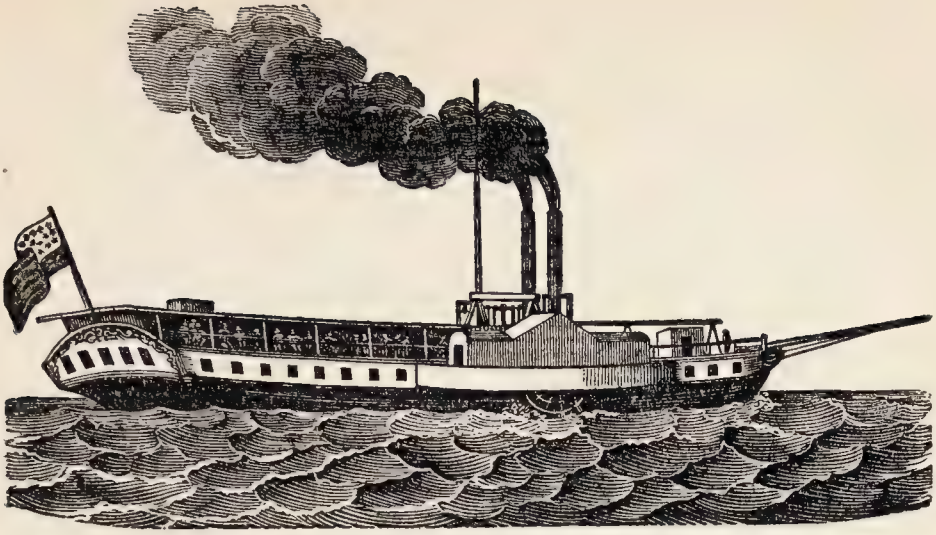
Specification 1st — In this, that he, the said Cadet Poe, after having been directed by the officer of the day to attend church on the 23rd of January 1831, did fail to obey such order. . . .

Specification 2nd — In this, that he, the said Cadet Poe, did fail to attend the Academy on the 25th January 1831, after having been directed to do so by the officer of the day.

Poe pleaded *guilty* to all but the first specification of the first charge, to which he pleaded *not guilty*. As that charge was automatically proven by the rollbooks for formations, he thus put himself beyond all recommendations for mercy. "After mature deliberation on the testimony deduced," the "prisoner" was found "Guilty on all the charges and specifications," and it was adjudged "that he, Cadet E. A. Poe, be *dismissed* the service of the United States."[382] The sentence was made effective as of March 6, 1831, in order to provide sufficient sums out of his pay to satisfy his indebtedness to the Academy. On that date Poe was officially discharged with a balance to his credit of twenty-four cents. Long before that, however, he was on his way to New York City.

The findings of the court-martial were approved by the Secretary of War on February 8, 1831, and seem to have taken a week

[382] An abbreviated transcript of *Military Academy Order No. 7*, Engineer Department, Washington, February 8, 1831. Prof. James H. Harrison prints this, vol. II, pages 374–376, from Ingram.



An Early Steamboat on the New York to Albany Route in the days of Poe

From an old print

Courtesy of the Pennsylvania Historical Society

or so before they were returned to West Point. Poe must have had some qualms imagining the face of Major Eaton as he read the record of the trial and called to mind the enthusiastic promises of a certain Richmond youth a little over a year before, one who had walked from Baltimore to plead his case personally. That, however, deterred neither Mr. Secretary nor Cadet Poe, and on February 17 or 18 the latter was given his release.

One can imagine him upon the evening of that eventful day packing up his books, John Allan's inkstand, a few uniforms which he kept to remind him of past glories, and the *lares* and *penates* which accompanied even the poorest of waif poets in the iron-bound trunk that John Allan had sent him by steamboat to Baltimore. Then he made the rounds, saying good-bye, not without a certain relish for the brief glamor that surrounds a departing spirit at the Military Academy, who has dared to defy the delegated authority of the United States — and survived. And we can imagine him, too, selling off for what he could get, a few *picayunes* and *fipenny bits* at most, the scanty remains of his outfit. Perhaps there was a shako, or a slim sword exchanged next morning at Old Benny's for a thin second-hand suit of citizen's clothes, a parting nip with the old rascal " on the house," with " here's luck." It was, we know, a cold, a very cold day.

On February 19, 1831, the steamboat from Albany stopped at the desolate West Point wharf to take on board a lonely figure dressed in a nondescript costume consisting of a thin and badly worn suit of second-hand clothes rendered somewhat grotesque by a cadet's overcoat and a battered hat. A small iron-bound trunk was trundled on board, and the old side-wheeler " Henry Eckford " thrashed her way down stream toward New York.[383] The young man on the deck shivered and fingered the lonely coins in his pocket somewhat apprehensively. No one, who saw the nervous trembling of the bird-like fingers, would have suspected that they had just relinquished the sword and were al-

[383] From *The Northern Traveler,* a guidebook of the time, and a contemporary steamboat schedule, it appears that the steamer " Henry Eckford," with two freight barges in tow, plied between New York and Albany and made local stops. The fare from New York to Albany was $1.00. The " Henry " called at West Point Dock, February 19, 1831, on the down trip.

ready reaching ambitiously for a mightier weapon. The fare was at least seventy-five cents, and that was about all he had. The two freight barges behind the "Henry" took up the slack of the tow line with a swish and trailed on behind; the departing wail of the steamer's whistle echoed up the gorge of the Hudson, to be answered by the notes of a bugle from the heights above. Future generals of the United States and the Confederacy were on their way to recitation and the several stars that afterwards adorned their shoulders or collars. Israfel was following his own.

CHAPTER XIV
The Weary, Wayworn Wanderer

POE arrived in New York about February 20, 1831, and seems to have remained there until the end of March of that year. During this sojourn, his movements and doings are exceedingly obscure. The young man who took up lodgings somewhere close to Madison Square can best be described in his own words as "a weary, wayworn wanderer." He was literally penniless, and thinly clad. There was no *Ellis & Allan* to draw upon for even a mourning suit now; he was just out of West Point and without sufficient civilian clothes. His scheme seems to have been to obtain literary work of some sort, probably with the newspapers, while the forthcoming volume held out some hopes of a small return. But in the meantime he must eat, and he was also very ill.

In the last letter from West Point, Poe had assured John Allan that he would never trouble him again. Faced by starvation and the prospect of a serious illness, however, he was once more forced to eat humble pie, lacking anything more substantial. Two days after leaving the Military Academy he writes in his New York lodging from what he feels is probably his death-bed, asking his "father" to send him enough to keep from starving.

The break at West Point and the severance of all home ties, with the consequent necessity of making an immediate *about face* in his plans and order of life, had undoubtedly entailed a fierce mental and spiritual struggle. He was, in fact, in one of those nervous emotional crises which make or mar a career.[384] This was reflected in his physical condition. He left West Point in a depleted and fatigued state. The trip down, we are told, was bitterly cold, and he had no adequate clothing, — "no cloak" — he

[384] New light upon Poe's condition, and the date of his arrival in New York, has been thrown on this period by the *Valentine Museum Letters*, letter No. 25, New York, February 21, 1831.

says, although it is known that he brought with him from the Military Academy his cadet's overcoat and wore it years later even at Fordham.[385] However that may be, he contracted an almost fatal "cold," complicated by ear trouble. The result seems to have been one of those periods of complete nervous and psychic exhaustion that occasionally overtook him from now on, in which a weak heart played an important part.[384] In the midst of this he wrote the despairing letter to Richmond.[384]

In this letter, in addition to his desperate appeals for help, which even the disordered and blotted writing stamps as genuine, Poe attempts to defend himself for his course of procedure; lays the blame for being "dismissed" on his guardian's refusal to give him permission to resign; and expatiates on his excellent standing in class, and the sympathy of his superiors and classmates. This sympathy, he says, he possessed; adding that sickness was the real cause of his dropping out, — and everybody at "The Point" knew it. In the meantime he is writing from his "death-bed," and a little help during his last hours would be grateful.

The letter is undoubtedly exaggerated in its self-pity, but it was written during a time of great pain from a discharging ear, with the horror of starvation near, alone in a strange city, and by a terrified and delicately sensitive young man. Where else could he appeal but to "Dear Pa" and "home." "Do not tell my sister," he pleads — "I shall send to the post office every day." But he sent in vain. That home which he addressed was his no longer. The letter was smugly filed away to receive over two years later a coldly furious endorsement from a stern hand.

Somehow, doubtless to his own surprise, Poe recovered in a week or so and found himself able to read proofs at the office of Elam Bliss at 111 Broadway, where "the second edition" of *Poems* was underway. Mr. Bliss, who was a kindly man, may also have taken pity on the young poet and have invited him to dine with him at his home at 28 Dey Street, where we may be sure the hospitality was, to the guest at least, no empty formality.

[385] This coat, and various other items of military attire, evidently relics of West Point days, are mentioned by several persons who knew Poe from this time on.

One of the few reminiscences of Poe at this time comes from Peter Pindar Pease, an erstwhile clerk at a Charlottesville store, who says he had met Poe in Boston when in similar desperate circumstances and who now ran across him again in New York.[386] From him it seems that it was Poe's custom to walk under the elm trees in Madison Square, and, that upon one occasion, Poe dined with Peter Pindar Pease and informed him that he had at last "struck it hard"; meaning that he was in good luck, and probably referring to the new book. The statement is, characteristic. Nothing could tame the young poet's pride; the possibility of fame from the book must have filled his mind. Despite the indications of poverty which Pease noted, he found Poe in a confident and boastful mood. Who paid for the dinner, we do not learn.

At this period Inman, the artist, had his studio at 48 Vesey Street, and it was now, *if at any time,* that he painted the portrait of Poe with which he has been credited. It is doubtful if he really did so, however, as the picture does not resemble the other known authentic likenesses of Poe in later life. All that can be said is that it shows a well-dressed, rather slight, sensitive featured, and delicately bred young man in his early twenties, and that it *might* be Poe. If so, it is the earliest picture of the poet known. Mr. Bliss may have arranged for it on the strength of the forthcoming book, but it is *extremely unlikely*. Poe was penniless and unknown, and there is no indication that Inman was his close friend. The picture may be any young dandy in the costume of the time.

It was a hard time financially, too. Jackson's fast and loose fiscal policy was already beginning to make money tight, and the times were distinctly close ones for the inhabitants of the avenues as well as Grubb Street.[387] Evidently the bulk of the money for the

[386] From an untraced clipping from an article. "P. P. Pease" is alluded to elsewhere as an early prohibitionist and anti-saloon man. Dr. Mabbott suggests *The Outlook*. I have been unable to verify this as the source.

[387] Andrew Jackson was attacking the charter of the Bank of the United States, and the period of financial chaos, state banks, and "wild cat" money was being ushered in. While Poe was in New York in February, 1831, the attack was going on in Congress. (Benton, *View*, I. 187–325; Deb., XI. 143–61.) The effect was alarming.

new book was not forthcoming until it was delivered at West Point. Perhaps a few advances saved the day. So it was hard sledding at best. Poe wrote to his brother Henry, for whom he had already gone into debt, but his brother was now dying in Baltimore and could not aid him. By the beginning of March it was evident that New York would not afford a living to an unknown pen, and we find the young poet writing to Colonel Thayer, the Superintendent at West Point, whose favor he seems to have over-estimated. Colonel Thayer had probably been "kind," but he doubtless, for all that, had his reservations about young gentlemen who were dismissed for not attending church, even when directed to do so by the officer of the day! Temporarily, Poe seems to have considered becoming a soldier of fortune.
The letter read:

New York, *March* 10, 1831.

Sir; — Having no longer any ties which can bind me to my native country — no projects — nor any friends — I intend by the first opportunity to proceed to Paris with the view of obtaining through the interest of the Marquis de La Fayette an appointment (if possible) in the Polish Army.

In the event of the interference of France in behalf of Poland this may easily be effected — [388] at all events it will be my only feasible plan of procedure.

The object of this letter is respectfully to request that you will give me such assistance as may be in your power in furtherance of my views.

A certificate of ' standing ' in my class is all that I have any right to expect.

Anything further — a letter to a friend in Paris — or to the Marquis — would be a kindness which I should never forget. Most respectfully,

Yr. obt. s't.,
Edgar A. Poe

Col. S. Thayer, Supt. U. S. M. A.[389]

[388] In 1830–31 the Poles rebelled against the tyranny of Tsar Nicholas I. Patriotic secret societies drove the Russians out of Warsaw November 29, 1830. On January 25, 1831, the independence of Poland was proclaimed; the help of France was hoped for. A few months later the rebellion was suppressed with frightful cruelty on both sides. By September, 1831, it was over. Poe evidently watched these events carefully.

[389] Printed in the *New York Sun* for October 30, 1902, from manuscripts left to the Association of West Point Graduates by General Cullum.

What an impression La Fayette had made on Poe, and how much he counted on the influence of his grandfather's friend is plainly shadowed forth in this letter. Colonel Thayer did not reply, it seems, and the young writer evidently soon gave up all thought of following a military career any longer. It was the last gesture in that direction, and a desperate one at that, but it is interesting to note that, even at this date, Poe felt it might be well for him to go abroad. Perhaps he felt instinctively that his talents might be appreciated where he, indeed, first received the greatest recognition. There was evidently no place for him in New York. Assured of this, he began once more to turn his thoughts toward Baltimore. Richmond offered nothing. In Baltimore, at least there were family relations, and, through them, he might hope to gain friends. If nothing else, Mrs. Clemm's house offered maternal affection and a roof. In the meantime the poems had appeared, and Poland had capitulated. In that, the letter to Colonel Thayer had received a conclusive answer.

Sometime about the end of March, 1831, Elam Bliss seems to have completed *Poems* by Edgar A. Poe, " second edition," and the cadets at West Point were pondering and grumbling over the incomprehensible lines of *Israfel, To Helen, Lenore, The Sleeper,* and *The Valley of Unrest.* Nor did the inscription

TO THE U. S. CORPS OF CADETS
THIS VOLUME
IS
RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED

tend to ease the sting of having been gulled. No one, of course, suspected that it was the most enduring compliment that a certain " corps " could receive. For a few minutes, the dark figure that had been a stranger among them was recalled. Then the busy bugles blew again drowning out the disgruntled laughter. It seemed as if for a third time the young poet's assault upon oblivion had called forth nothing but derision, and a few, a very few coins. On these he remained some days longer in New York, and on the remainder, a very scant remainder, set out wayworn and weary shortly afterward for Baltimore. It was at least a move

towards his own native shore. The loadstone of "home," however, still fluttered the directing needle because, for Poe, Richmond never lost the peculiar quality of a magnet. Elmira was still there, and all the other invisible lines of magnetism were set strong.

Poe's third book, *Poems* (second edition) New York, published by Elam Bliss, 1831, was a duodecimo volume of 124 pages bound in pale green boards, and rather poorly printed on ordinary rag paper. The exact number of the edition is not known, but it certainly did not exceed five hundred.[390] The title page bore the line from La Chausee,[391] "*Tout le monde a Raison,*" this sentiment being a sort of plea for a liberal attitude toward the contents of the book and for the critical theories which it advocated in the preface entitled, "Letter to Mr. —— ——." This anonymous person is addressed as "Dear B," and may have been Elam Bliss himself. The poems were here reprinted in revised form from the earlier Baltimore edition of 1829. In that sense only the 1831 *Poems* was a second edition.

The "Letter to Mr. B" is somewhat rambling, and was evidently written in off-hours at West Point, whence it is dated. In this preface, Poe informs us, amid a rather youthful parade of erudition resounding with the names of Shakespeare and Milton, that in his revisions of earlier work he has learned the lesson of the shears, and that these poems now appear with "the trash taken away from them in which they were embedded." The most interesting thing in the epistle to "Mr. B," however, is the appearance here for the first time of Poe's theory of poetic criticism. Literary reputation, he says, percolates the social pyramid from "a few gifted individuals who kneel around the summit, beholding, face to face, the master spirit who stands upon the pinnacle." After a brief comment on the difficulty of an American author being taken seriously he continues:

390 This is a liberal estimate and allows for the number distributed at West Point, and about two hundred fifty for general distribution — half and half — a not improbable arrangement.

391 Dr. Thomas Ollive Mabbott finds that this line, heretofore attributed to Rochefoucauld, is from La Chausee, the whole quotation meaning, "When all the world is wrong, all the world is right."

POEMS

BY

EDGAR A. POE.

TOUT LE MONDE A RAISON.—ROCHEFOUCAULT.

SECOND EDITION.

New York:
PUBLISHED BY ELAM BLISS.
1831.

Title Page of *Poems*—Second Edition
Published in New York by Elam Bliss in 1831
Edgar Allan Poe's third published Volume usually known as the "West Point Book"
Courtesy of a New York Collector

You are aware of the great barrier in the path of an American writer. He is read, if at all, in preference to the combined and established wit of the world. — Our antiquaries abandon time for distance, our very fops glance from the binding to the bottom of the title page, where the mystic characters which spell London, Paris, or Geneva, are precisely so many letters of recommendation. . . .

After this brief beginning of what was later to develop into one of the favorite themes of his acrid criticism, Poe leaps rapidly past Aristotle, taking the opportunity to shy a brick at didactic poetry, which leads him to Wordsworth whom he handles roughly. Coleridge he mentions next with reverence. To him indeed, he owed most of his theory of poetry with which he ends this rather remarkable but nevertheless jejune preface:

A poem, is in my opinion,[392] opposed to a work of science by having, for its *immediate* object, pleasure not truth: to romance by having for its object an *indefinite* instead of a *definite* pleasure, being a poem only so far as this object is attained: romance presenting perceptible images with definite, poetry with indefinite sensations, to which end music is an essential, since the comprehension of sweet sound is our most indefinite conception. Music, when combined with a pleasurable idea, is poetry, music, without the idea, is simply music: the idea without the music, is prose from its very definiteness.

This was the germ of the famous lecture of years later on *The Poetic Principle,* and the source, having its roots, in the discussions of Coleridge, from which he developed and elaborated his own canons for both writing and criticizing verse. Like nearly all poetic criticism by poets, it was, in its final analysis, a special and ingenious plea for the kind of poetry he himself wrote. Despite the leaven of considerable truth, it remains as an interesting example of "rationalization."

The body of the book contained eleven poems, notably: *To Helen, Israfel,* and *The Doomed City,* the first version of the later a much improved *City in the Sea. To Helen* has, in its revised form, taken its place as one of the great lyrics of the lan-

[392] With the exception of the words "in my opinion," this theory is lifted verbatim from Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria,* chapter XIV. I am indebted to Mr. Joseph Wood Krutch for this reference showing the early effect of Coleridge on Poe.

guage, while *Israfel* is undoubtedly the first, wildly clear burst of song of the " bitter, bright, cold morning " of a winter day that was to end, like all winter days, in early night. No more golden notes of prideful promise have ever been uttered as a prelude. As usual the sources of the poems betray a strange mixture of autobiography, with real and imaginary landscapes.

> I could not love have except where Death
> Was mingling his with Beauty's breath, —
> Or Hymen, Time and Destiny
> Were stalking between her and me. —

strongly recalls the experiences of the past decade with the tragic death of Mrs. Stanard and Frances Allan, the unfortunate outcome of the affair with Elmira Royster, and the troubles at home. The figure of the " Lost Beloved " now first comes strongly into its own. " Helen " is probably a combination and imaginative synthesis of Jane Stith Stanard and Frances Allan with the abstract longing for the perfect Belovéd common to all young men. *Lenore* seems to be more definitely applicable to Elmira. As for *Israfel* it is undoubtedly about Poe himself. *The City in the Sea,* and the *Valley of Unrest* combine the peculiar effects of browsings in Oriental literature, and the memories of Scotland and the Carolina Low Country fused with a mystical magic. Some of the lines, and even whole poems, approach perilously near the banal, but they are nearly always saved by a certain distinction. Many of the selections, notably, *Irene,* later called *The Sleeper,* owed their fame to the revisions of later years. But despite all this, there are many great lines in the book, and it can safely be said that it constitutes an important addition to American poetry. *Al Aaraaf* again appeared together with *Tamerlane,* now, for the second time, considerably revised. *Israfel* itself still waited the sure and final touches of the now rapidly maturing hand. For the first time Poe had written poems which in conception, music, and content were wholly and peculiarly his own.

For the time being, however, the inward knowledge of this accomplishment had to be its own reward. The only concrete evidence of public approbation was a few dollars left over from the

subscription, which Mr. Bliss paid to the poet, several author's copies, and the following obscure notice whose very source has been forgotten.

> The poetry of this little volume has a plausible air of imagination, inconsistent with the general indefiniteness of the ideas. Everything in the language betokens poetic inspiration, but it rather resembles the leaves of the sybil when scattered by the winds. . . .[393]

Packing a few copies of his poems and his pitiably scant "wardrobe" in what must have been a very cheap or second-hand carpet-bag, Poe took the few dollars that remained to him, after Mr. Elam Bliss and the printers were satisfied, and made his way to Baltimore, probably immediately after his writing the letter to Colonel Thayer. That seems to have been a final gesture of sheer desperation.[394]

A guidebook of the time,[365] evidently written for prudent and conservative travelers, informs the wary voyager that in New York "it is best to go to the steam boat ten or fifteen minutes before the time of departure to avoid the crowd which always collects at the dock. *Caution,* if luggage is sent by a porter, ask him for his number, so that if he is negligent or dishonest, he may be reported at the police office." This caution we may be sure Poe did not have to observe upon the blustering March day in 1831, when he set out for Baltimore via Philadelphia. If the iron-bound trunk largely filled with *Poems,* second edition, accompanied him, it must have done so upon a wheelbarrow, side by side with the faded flowers upon a carpet-bag, and the "crowd" at the docks just above the Battery, doubtless looked somewhat askance at the starved and Spanish-looking young gentleman attired in a cadet's overcoat and a beaver hat. A pair of clumsy army boots disguised what would otherwise have been a rather neat and delicate foot.

There were at that time four steamboat lines connecting with Philadelphia, the first stage of the journey taking the traveler as

393 Woodberry prints this from some anonymous press clippings.

394 The letter to Colonel Thayer was written from New York on March 10, 1831; on May 6, 1831, he wrote in Baltimore to William Gwynn.

far as Perth Amboy or New Brunswick. The boats left from "downtown" docks, and, as they pulled out for the Jersey side of the Hudson, the little city of New York lay spread before one. It was a delightful old town. A dash of green along the Battery — "on summer evenings the place is supplied with music, and often fireworks . . . and Castle Garden has a fine promenade. . . . Broadway, the most fashionable promenade in the city, is most crowded with passengers between one and three o'clock, or in hot weather, after dinner." There were forty-two fire engines, besides *two hook and ladder companies!* — Eight (8) large brick schoolhouses, "averaging nearly forty-two by eighty-five feet in size," where no less than five thousand children enjoyed the maps, globes, and libraries, and the uniform system of the Lancasterian Plan at $1.25 a quarter, although two of them were "given over" to Africans.[365] The mass of low-roofed, white framed and brick houses topped by a few flat steeples, extended in a solid mass as far north as Washington Street. "The village of Hoboken is seen a mile or more up the river and the hills of Weehauken, but on the eastern shore of the river opposite the Palisades . . . the soil is inferior; and the woodland encroaches too much upon the fields and orchards." Here, in the middle distance, glimmered the spire and the farmhouses of Greenwich Village. "The Lunatic Asylum, about seven miles from the city, is a large building of hewn stone, occupying a commanding position."

The world across which the young Poe moved from New York to Baltimore wore, as yet, an ancient face. It was the world which had remained largely stationary from Julius Caesar to Napoleon. Its rhythms were those of the coach horse and the water mill, and its thoughts were secondary reflections on the sages and poets of Palestine, Greece and Rome. Only here and there a subtle change was beginning to come across it. Now and then white sails were prophetically veiled by steamer smoke, here and there a factory chimney disputed the eminence of the church steeple; the prisms of canals cut across the landscape, or groups of surveyors began to whisper through the yet colonial countryside the strange syllables of "railroad." Groups of farmers would shortly be gathering to toss up their hats as their first *iron-horse* roared by.

The quiet of the landscape was, however, deceptive, for, in the towns, the giant of an industrial democracy had already begun to stretch himself. The unexpected surplus in the Federal Treasury was being divided among the states for " national improvements." Under the eager demands of the Western voters who had left the stains of their muddy boots on John Quincy Adams' aristocratic furniture, as Andrew Jackson entered the White House with a whoop, — canals were already stretching their arms across the mountains, and railway routes were following fast. The making, the carrying, and the marketing of things as an end in itself, was about to become the be-all and the end-all here. It was the last comprehensive glimpse at the undisturbed world into which he had been born that Israfel was to have. In a few years a gigantic change was to sweep across the landscape, altering the very aspect of things, disturbing that subtle balance and blend of objects, the eternal fitness of one thing with another, which only nature can produce on a grand scale, and which men have called " beauty." Nor was this process, which went on so rapidly and, in its first crude essays, under the eyes of Poe, unseen by him or uncommented upon. The young poet who had already written:

> Science! true daughter of Old Time thou art!
> Who alterest all things with thy peering eyes.
> Why preyest thou thus upon the poet's heart,
> Vulture, whose wings are dull realities?

was thoroughly aware of the secrets which the " peering eyes " had found, secrets that were being applied to " dull realities " to " alter all things, to drive

> . . . the Hamadryad from the wood
> To seek a shelter in some happier star. . . ."

He too sought a shelter in a happier star. It was the sphere of his dreams, made up largely of the visions of the early more integrated world of his childhood and the reveries extracted from the literature of other epochs. This was the world for which he longed, and looked back upon with a heart-uneasy homesickness, that strange longing which lends a romantic retrospect, and a

mystic delight, to the many hermitages which he evoked with words; such as, *The Valley of Grass, The Landscape Garden,* and the *Domain of Arnheim.* Along with this desire " to return," so impossible of fulfillment, as he grew older, was the ever-widening angle between himself and the world of reality around him, a progressive and cumulative advance of nervous and psychic incompatibility that made him less and less capable of coping with an environment which grew more and more out of harmony with his desires. From now on, this divergence must be reckoned with as we watch Israfel tossed from horn to horn of an impossible dilemma; that of a personality without a neighborhood. The refuges, and anodynes, the seductive subterfuges to which he resorted were often more fatal than the trouble itself. Indeed, the very medicines which their victim prescribed, were, in a large sense, the symptoms of the progressive disease which he sought to allay. It was a strange acceleration of blended cause and effect that fused into one tremendous cause, destined to finally hurl him out of a world which he found intolerable, a cumulative tragedy, that ended in a smash resounding through time. Fortunately, for us, the spectators, both the victim and the rapidly shifting world across which he moved were strangely, almost grotesquely, interesting.

Poe had been born into the easy-going, sedate, and in many ways self-sufficient world of the early Republic, its conventions were those of a primarily agricultural society. Its methods and means of life had culminated in attitudes which were the result of generations of experience, and its taste was reflected in the semi-classical costume, architecture, and furniture of the day. That, in short, was its objective comment upon life. It was a world of gentlemen and ladies, who regarded themselves in the half-English, half-Roman Republic that they founded, as the natural directors and patrons of the society which they were born to administer. Across this quiet picture the hand of " progress " suddenly moved an erasive sponge dipped in a solvent of the new ideas and forces released by mechanical science, and the drab wash of a frontier democracy without tradition. For a few decades all the colors in the social picture, ran and blended; outlines and

perspective were lost in the total effect of a crude smear. It was through these decades that Poe lived; at the end of the incredible forties, when he died. He disliked the strong solution on the sponge, and he doubted the direction of the hand which employed it. From this disturbed picture of running colors in the stage of solution, the domains which he perfected in literature were his escape. Like other men he could not climb completely out of his own time, but the physical means which he employed to escape out of its rococo frame, constitute the story of his own undoing.

In 1831, the first daubs of the sponge were just beginning to be apparent. The Republic was ended and the Democracy had begun. Andrew Jackson had introduced the spoils system.[395] It was a political idea that had many social ramifications.

Poe had seen the port of New York in 1820, upon his return from England. It was then scarcely more than an enlarged and hustling colonial town enmeshed in a mass of yards and rigging of the sail-borne argosies of the world. In 1831, a new note was upon the water and the landscape. Here and there a factory chimney raised its dark plumed head amid the steeples, and against the snow banks of sails crossed the nervous spider web of walking-beams driving over half a hundred side-wheel steamers that, even at that date, threaded the harbor and rivers of Manhattan. Their paddles ate steadily into the problem of distance with an astonishing and prophetic speed. Characteristically enough, the passengers did not care very much where they were going; all that they knew was that they were going faster. For them, and for their descendants, it has been enough. The age of marvels had begun.

The " Philadelphia Steam Boat Line " at that time ended at New Brunswick in New Jersey where travelers took up the second lap of the journey on the " Forenoon Line " of stages, after staying at the hotel all night. We are assured by good contemporary authority [365] that " the view is pretty from the hill . . . whence

[395] During the first year of Jackson's presidency about 690 officers were removed. The subordinates removed by these swelled the number of those who lost their positions to about 2000. The total number of removals by all former Presidents was 74.

public buildings appear to good advantage, particularly the Theological Seminary, which is under the synod of the Dutch Reformed Church — thence the route led to Princeton, covered behind laboring post horses, with dinner at the stage-house just opposite *Nassau Hall* in the center of the town. Just across the street was the large college yard, the heavy shade trees, and the "fashionable burying ground," where "sober" travelers could walk off the fumes of poker-heated toddy by perusing the edifying epitaphs of Aaron Burr, Jonathan Edwards, Samuel Davis, Samuel Finley, John Witherspoon, and even Samuel S. Smith. Then it was only ten miles by way of Lamberton and the State Prison to Trenton, over a bridge on the Delaware, "a handsome structure with five arches" that gave approach to "a town of considerable size, with a great number of stores and the aspect of business." Doubtless Poe took it all in from the less comfortable but cheaper and more "aspect-informing" top of the "Forenoon Line."

At Trenton, the Union Line Steamers left for Philadelphia, "except when the water is low," paddling by Coal Haven — a little cove on the west side of the river where "arks" laden with coal from the Lehigh mines waited to be towed to Philadelphia [396] — and thence past Bordentown on a steep sandbank through which a road cut down to the dock. Just north of the village stood the long white house of Joseph Bonaparte, the Count de Survilliers — and one time King of Spain — with the two low square towers at the end, and a great shot tower near it on the river. Bristol was passed next, "where a number of gentlemen's seats adorned the river banks with much admired flower gardens along the verge lington with a row of fine residences facing the river. Before it ornamented with fine weeping willows." A little beyond, lay Burran a wide, grassy street with a beautiful sloping embankment. Below Burlington, the banks of the Delaware widen and flatten

[396] "At Philadelphia is located the Bank of the United States, an institution, which, while it has signally failed in its prime object of producing a stable national currency, is heated by a furnace centrally located and fructified twice daily by Lehigh coals." Extract from a notice evidently written by a Jackson man, in a contemporary (1831) guide book. This sentence is peculiarly explanatory of the times.

out into a low and marshy country on the eighteen mile run to Philadelphia. It is, says the *Northern Traveler,* " quite unfriendly to the picturesque " — but it was then the haunt of reed birds, and wild, crimson-breasted ducks who fed sedately upon the edible cresses of the salt marsh, riding the waves of the passing steamers so confidently that they became the temptation of traveling sportsmen, who shot at them from the decks of steamboats, tilting their beaver hats back and discommoding their stocks to draw a bead along the elegantly chased barrels of English fowling pieces belching forth a deal of white smoke and a loud " bang." [397]

About here supper was ready. The captain sat at the head of the long, white table set with a profusion of side dishes and thick, ruddy glasses, while overhead the chain chandeliers jangled musically at every down stroke of the simple engine; the whistle wailed away over the marshes; the alternate jets of steam darted upward, now to port, and now to starboard from the stand-pipes, and the smoke rolled backward from the trim smoke-stacks topped with the prim lace of pointed iron-cuffs.

Over this placid fertile Delaware valley, which had been the home of Mark Woolston, Cooper's hero of the *Rancocus* and *The Peak* — stories that were familiar to Poe — young Israfel gazed from the hurricane deck of the Union Line Steamer on a March day in the early thirties, when around a great bend in the river a distant steeple and a high shot tower overtopping the low roofs of the Quaker City came into sight.

Three glass-houses near the water, with white walls and black roofs, next engaged the attention of the curious traveler, with the shipyards behind; then the boat house in the Navy Yard rising over a little island in the river loomed up, and the steamer swung into the Market and Arch Street wharves. There was a tangle of the spars of square-riggers along the waterfront, gilded figure-heads leaping out from the arch bows of fast clippers loading for London, China, and the wide world; a rumble of drays along the cobbled quays — and the crowd of gentlemen with high

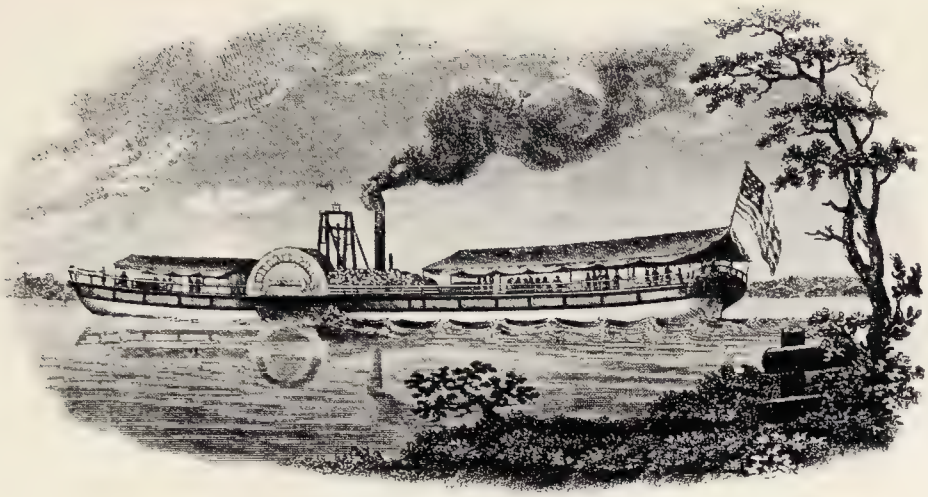
[397] The habit of shooting at game from public conveyances was an American custom upon which foreign travelers of the time comment with disgust.

hats and gold-knobbed canes, ladies in rustling silk skirts with bustles, poke bonnets, absurd little cloth slippers peeping in and out under their dresses, and little girls with lace frilled pantalettes rushed out of the dock-houses to climb high busses with eagles and landscapes painted on their sides, or to be bustled, valises, leather trunks and all, into high-backed carriages that rumbled and swayed homeward over the joggling flagstones of the narrow streets, lit dimly here and there by a chained whale-oil lamp.

The sanded floor of some waterfront tavern where candles burned dimly in the small square-paned windows probably extended its humble hospitality to Poe. Like Franklin, a century before, he had arrived in Philadelphia with only a few pennies in his pockets. There was, of course, the *United States Hotel* on Chestnut Street opposite the Great Bank, or the *Mansion House* on South Third, or, for the more domestically inclined, Mrs. Sword's on Walnut Street, whose scrapple and sausage breakfasts were famous, or Mrs. Allen's on Sixth Street near the State House, who went in for " sparrow-grass " and reed birds smothered in butter — but all of these implied the possession of bank notes. Besides, New York money was at a discount in Pennsylvania. We may be sure that a certain young man, the author of three books of poems, lately dismissed from West Point, dried his army overcoat before a far less pretentious fire somewhere near the Market.

About the same time a poor youth by the name of Horace Greeley arrived in New York with all his worldly goods bundled in a handkerchief.

Whether Poe called on his friend, Mr. Lea, at Carey & Lea, the publishers, or on the editor of the Philadelphia *Casket* during this sojourn of a few hours in the Quaker City is not known. He seldom missed an opportunity to cultivate an editor, but this time he was provided with neither the clothes nor the mood to make an impression, and it is not probable that he was advertising the fact in influential quarters that he had been dismissed from West Point. The state of his purse also admitted of no delay, and the day after his arrival probably saw him on the way to Balti-



On the Philadelphia Trenton Line

From an old print

Courtesy of the Pennsylvania Historical Society



Philadelphia from the Navy Yard

From an old print

Courtesy of the Pennsylvania Historical Society



Baltimore in the Early 1830's

During the time of Poe's residence there with his Aunt Maria Clemm

From an old print

Courtesy of the Maryland Historical Society

more on the steamboat line by which he had made the trip two years before.

Baltimore was then the third city in the United States. Owing to the development of ship canals between it and Philadelphia, and the building of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, it was like many other American towns of the time, just entering upon a period of surprising enterprise. Along with this, there was a considerable publishing business of newspapers and more or less intermittent periodicals sponsored by various literary groups. "The harbor in the Patapsco River has a narrow entrance and is well protected by high ground. On the side opposite the city is an abrupt elevation of considerable size, where is a fort, and whence a commanding view is enjoyed." The city itself consisted of broad streets with a number of public monuments and imposing public buildings whose architecture was largely confined to their façades. Above the low, black roofs, projected the dome of the cathedral, the turreted Washington Monument, the steeple of St. Paul's Church, and the strange round cylinder of a high shot tower. The river front itself was a mass of red brick warehouses bordering long slips which gave the harbor somewhat the appearance of the keys of a piano. Along these lay steamers with the rakish lines of Aladdin's slippers, and crescent paddle boxes blazoned with their names; also schooners, lumber and produce rafts, and the rake-masted Baltimore clippers.[398] Fells Point, about a mile below the more fashionable higher levels, was the business section where most of the stores and shipping interests were situated. It was in this district, in Mechanic's Row on Milk Street (now Eastern Avenue), where Poe's aunt, Maria Clemm, still resided.

Here it was that sometime about the end of March, 1831, Poe came home. One can imagine the ecstatic welcome of Virginia ("Siss" was now grown to be quite a fair sized girl) as Cousin Eddie came into the upstairs room with his wonderful soldier coat on, and Mrs. Clemm dropping her sewing to welcome home

[398] The description of Baltimore, which provided the scene in which Poe was to move for the next few years, has been taken from old prints and letters of the day.

the wanderer with a somewhat perplexed but nevertheless hearty hug from her strong motherly arms. There was also a feeble but well-meant handshake from the pale and hollow-cheeked Henry, and a wan smile from paralytic Grandmother Poe, now completely bed-ridden. That night " Muddie " set another place at the table, and put another cup of water in the soup, while Eddie unpacked his few clothes and disposed his books and papers on the third floor. He was back in the attic room with Henry again. Thanks to Mrs. Clemm, there was a roof over them both, and something to eat. For Edgar it was a permanent arrangement. Henry was dying.

CHAPTER XV
"The Mysterious Years"

SPEAKING of Poe many years later, in New York, Elizabeth Oakes Smith, one of the *literati,* remarked, "men, such as Edgar Poe, will always have an ideal of themselves by which they represent the chivalry of a Bayard and the heroism of a Viking, when, in fact, they are utterly dependent and tormented with womanish sensibilities." [399] There can be little doubt that, in this estimate, Mrs. Smith was essentially correct. Baltimore, 1831, marks the beginning of the period, which extended through all the rest of his life, when Poe gave himself up, in his domestic life, to a complete dependence for sympathy and physical comfort upon his aunt, Mrs. Clemm. As time went on, his cousin Virginia gradually took her own peculiar place in the circle of domestic pillars upon which he leaned. All attempt to realize objectively the Viking-military ideal had passed with West Point — the letter to Colonel Thayer, and the contemplated trip abroad to enter the Polish Army, was the last move in that direction. But the romantic, Bayard-chivalric idea still lingered, and was evident to the end in the various episodes with women, more especially in the juvenile affairs of the years in Baltimore and Richmond.

Hence, one of the first glimpses we have of the young poet after his arrival in Baltimore,[400] is his calling in full cadet regalia, and in company with Brother Henry, upon a young lady by the name of Kate Blakely who lived nearby. Miss Blakely was the daughter of Matthew Blakely, the proprietor of the *Armstead Hotel* on Short Swan Street between Jones Fields and the Market Space. She was probably one of the elder brother's flames. They

[399] Selections from the *Autobiography of Elizabeth Oakes Smith,* edited by Mary Alice Wyman, Lewiston Journal Company, Lewiston, Maine, page 119.

[400] Information supplied from letters by a member of the Poe family in Maryland.

sat together in the hotel parlor. Kate seems to have been considerably impressed, and not a little flattered, by the attentions of " Mr. Allan Poe," as he called himself, and by the pale, rather willowy elder brother. Edgar enlarged upon his prospects in Richmond, and later on addressed verses to the young woman, who was, of course, flattered. The combination of brass buttons and poetry is a solvent one upon the young female heart, and perhaps Poe played the part well even in a hotel parlor. Kate's heart was fluttered, while Edgar had merely provided for himself a little stage upon which he might strut in costume, with a mild glow about the heart. The incident ended there. What Henry thought we do not know.

Edgar was tolerantly fond of his older brother who also wrote heart-smitten lyrics, and supplied an audience for the new book. Whether Henry was still attempting work in Mr. Didier's office is doubtful. He was far gone in consumption and lapsed frequently into drink. The two young men probably still shared Mrs. Clemm's attic room together. A good deal of the time of the younger brother must have been taken up nursing Henry, as the periods of his prostration became longer and more frequent. The nature of tuberculosis was still a mystery. It was then a " poetic," and a " genteel " disease.[401]

As early as May, Poe was casting about for steady literary work. On May 6, 1831, he wrote to William Gwynn of Baltimore, editor and owner of the *Federal Gazette,* asking him for work on a salary basis.[402] Mr. Allan's marriage, Poe said, had completely changed his prospects, and his guardian was anxious that he should remain in Baltimore.[403] Poe, it seems, had already quar-

[401] The statement is nowhere directly made in any correspondence that Henry Poe died of tuberculosis. From various indications and references to his ill health, his early death, the long period of his illness, and the fact that no specific name is given to his complaint, it is morally certain that consumption complicated by alcoholic excess was the cause.

[402] A Baltimore correspondent sends information of a Balloon-hoax story contributed by Poe to a Baltimore newspaper about April 1, 1831. It has not been possible to verify this. Dr. Mabbott informs me he " doubts it."

[403] This was pure fiction on Poe's part as there had been no communication between him and John Allan since the letter of February 21, 1831, in New York. The only basis for the statement is that Mr. Allan was certainly desirous of Poe's staying away from Richmond. Poe evidently still counted on his guardian's help,

relled with Gwynn, probably over the latter's treatment of *Al Aaraaf*.[404] For this he now apologized and asked the editor's indulgence. Neilson Poe had only recently left Mr. Gwynn's employ, and Edgar may have had some hopes of supplying his place in some humbler manner. But Mr. Gwynn did not see fit to reply. Poe was unable to see him personally as he (Poe) was confined to his room by "a severe sprain to his knee." The next move was to write his friend Dr. Nathan C. Brooks, upon whom he had called on his way to West Point,[405] asking him for a position as an usher (assistant-teacher) in a boys' school which Dr. Brooks had lately opened, at Reisterstown, Maryland. The position was already filled. The possibility of teaching, Poe seems to have kept in mind during most of the Baltimore sojourn.[406] It implied, at least, the possibility of salary and some leisure for the never-forgotten writing.

A little later Mrs. Clemm's sore pressed household was relieved of one of its helpless burdens by the prime remover of all difficulties. The *Baltimore American* for Tuesday August 2, 1831, contained this notice:

> Died last evening, W. H. Poe aged 24 years. His friends and acquaintances are invited to attend his funeral this morning at 9 from the dwelling of Mrs. Clemm in Milk Street. —

Henry was buried in the graveyard of the old First Presbyterian Church.

So June and July of 1831 must have been pretty well taken up with nursing the dying brother. As John Keats sat beside the bedside of his dying brother Tom, so Edgar Poe watched the passing of Henry under the spell of the same dread disease. There could have been time for very little work, and the whole process was enormously depressing, complicated as it was by a terrible poverty.

and therefore hoped to seem to act according to his desires. It will be remembered that Mr. Gwynn had been a law student with David Poe, the poet's father.

404 See Chapter XII, page 262. Also Poe to Gwynn, Baltimore, May 6, 1831.

405 See Chapter XII, page 267. Brooks continued Poe's friend for years; also Chapter XIX, page 441.

406 See Poe to Kennedy, Baltimore, March 15, (1835).

One can recall a little group of friends and relatives gathered upstairs at Mrs. Clemm's on a hot August morning in Baltimore. The depressing old hymns, little Virginia's terror, and the faint bird-like calls of the paralyzed grandmother as the shuffling feet carried the long burden downstairs, Mrs. Clemm in her widow's weeds, weeping. After the short journey to the churchyard, Edgar returned to find himself the sole occupant of the attic room. Perhaps a physical relief, but there was no one there now to whom to read the *Valley of Unrest* or to help cap rhymes. Henry's only legacy to his brother was the memory of his adventures and a debt, both of which Edgar claimed.[407] Only a dim memorial of Henry exists in a few obscure amorous verses published in the columns of the extinct Baltimore *North American* in 1827. Save for the curiosity of antiquaries and the reflected glory of Edgar, whose talents and vices Henry seems to have shared, William Henry Leonard Poe is a wasted and youthful shadow. The Poe and Herring cousins may have helped, probably with food. Edgar is known to have contracted a debt of $80 during his stay in Baltimore in 1829, part of which, he says, was for Henry.[407] The difficulties resulting from this debt occupy the chief place in the story of the remainder of the year. John Allan again figures in it largely.

For the time being, Poe evidently did not consider Henry's debt as his own, for on October 16, 1831, he wrote John Allan an affectionate and homesick letter in which he tells him that he is clear of the difficulty that he spoke of in his last letter (Poe may have been writing to Richmond after settling in Baltimore, but these letters have been lost). This letter,[408] however, completely does away with the story that at this time the young poet was receiving an allowance from John Allan; evidently nothing of the kind occurred, for Poe distinctly says that he grieves that it is so seldom he hears from John Allan or even of him. He is now writing, he says, because he has nothing to ask; but being by himself, and thinking over old times and " my only friends,"

[407] The debt was *probably* a note, endorsed for Henry in 1829 to help pay for doctors and medicines.

[408] *Valentine Museum Collection,* letter No. 26.

his heart is full. The letter contains a note of self-reproach, and, despite the possibility of mercenary interest — a possibility which Poe carefully counters — the letter can only be taken for a genuine expression of regret and affection. He ends with a postscript asking if his "father" will not write one word to him. The letter is addressed in care of William Galt.[409] Poe hoped that this good friend would learn of its contents when he put it in John Allan's hands. It would thus be delivered by a messenger in favor. The epistle is, when all is said and considered, nothing short of the cry of an exiled soul for news from home.

Poe had now had ample opportunity to reflect and feel the effects of his own total neglect of John Allan's advice. Despite the enormously complicated and aggravated circumstances of their long association, there was still an element of affection between them which cannot be denied. The very fact, that each could forever hurt the other, shows that a tie still existed, despite the written denials of both. Underneath the events of both their lives, the unshed tears of a father and son lost to each other murmured dismally in the deepest caverns of being. John Allan could not understand how he could ever lose anything that he had once possessed; Edgar Poe could not conceive how anyone could be finally angry with him. Call it sentimental or what not, but, "Dear Pa" says Edgar, "God bless you." In Richmond, John Allan kept turning over the old letters from Poe, endorsing them from time to time with evident emotion.

Yet all the ramifications of their long and bitter quarrel were at work in the inevitable chain of cause and effect. The letter which John Allan had written to Henry Poe in 1824[410] complaining of Edgar, must inevitably have had its effect upon the Baltimore relatives. Henry would almost surely show it to his cousins. Its vague attack on Edgar, and the dark insinuations which it contained against Mrs. Poe and Rosalie, made Mrs. Clemm forever

[409] Mr. Galt was looking after the business at *Ellis & Allan* for Mr. Allan who was now often absent. The address to William Galt thus insured its not being read by the clerks, and its getting into the correct hands. Poe was evidently anxious to reopen communication with Richmond; the long silence had greatly alarmed him.

[410] See Chapter VII, page 125.

uneasy. From time to time she hinted that there was "a great mystery."[411] From Mrs. Poe's letters, that Edgar so carefully guarded, she knew the truth, whatever it was, and this evidently was troubling enough. The Poes and Herrings, on their part, must have viewed the situation somewhat practically. Edgar, as far as they knew, seemed to have lost a literally golden opportunity. He had cast off the care of a rich guardian, and somehow or other managed to get disowned. The reasons for it could not be plain. It must have been, and as a matter of fact, it was, partly his own fault, so what he said was discounted. In the meanwhile, here was an unknown scribbler apparently content to live on Mrs. Clemm. One might help her, but, as for Edgar, it was well to be a little wary, especially as he fascinated one's daughters. All this affected Poe's attitude towards his cousins, particularly the Neilson Poes, and played its part shortly in his approaching clandestine marriage with Virginia.

Mrs. Clemm, on the other hand, took a more "motherly" view. With Henry dead and her own son "of not much account" (he was drinking and later went to sea) she felt strongly the necessity of a man in her household who was at least a protection and a putative bread-winner. Anyone who could get money for stringing words, she thought, must be a genius, and, above all this, she loved Edgar Poe. His personality, appearance and blood-relationship were enough. To a woman of her nature, the fact that he needed help was an irresistible appeal. From the day that he entered her door in 1831, he was at once sheltered and bound in the strong arms of a powerful and masterful, yet completely feminine woman, who only surrendered him at last, and then with a supreme and touching reluctance, to death. The marriage with Virginia was the cementing bond of the most overpowering relationship of the latter half of his life. For in the last twenty years of Poe's existence Maria Clemm assumed the major rôle in his affairs that John Allan had occupied during the first. Otherwise there was no comparison. A just and clear understanding of Mrs.

[411] Mary Devereaux spoke of this remark by Mrs. Clemm, see this chapter, page 333. Mrs. Clemm was not referring to conditions in Richmond, but to a Poe family mystery as she continued to hint of it years later after the Allan affairs were aired in court.

Clemm's vital influence upon Edgar Allan Poe is one with the comprehension of the man himself.

Maria Poe Clemm was born March 17, 1790, the younger sister by some five or six years of the poet's father, David. Her parents, " General " David, and Elizabeth Cairnes Poe were then living in Baltimore. On July 13, 1817, at the age of twenty-seven, she married William Clemm, Jr., a widower with five children, a little property, and some prospects, the ceremony taking place at St. Paul's Church, Baltimore. Mr. Clemm died February 8, 1826, leaving Mrs. Clemm penniless with two living children of her own: Henry, born September 10, 1818, and Virginia Maria, born August 15, 1822.[412] A third child, Virginia Eliza (named for Mrs. Herring, Poe's aunt), died in infancy. What little property Mr. Clemm had left, had gone to the children by the first wife or was in litigation. Henry, the son, was, as we have seen, a stonecutter. But he was of little real help, being an intermittent drinker. His movements and whereabouts are as obscure and uncertain as his character. Thus, in a double sense, Edgar Poe came into the life of Mrs. Clemm to take the place of a son. The tragic picture of the household was complete with Mrs. Elizabeth Poe, Virginia's and Edgar's grandmother, who had become bedridden in 1827 from paralysis, and, except for an insignificant pension, was totally dependent upon Mrs. Clemm. Edgar was thus living with the closest relations he had left, his aunt, and his full cousin Virginia. In 1831, Virginia was only nine years old, yet it was only four years later that she became Poe's wife. How important or significant either her inclination or judgments were in the marriage, can best be arrived at by a comparison of dates. A full discussion of this must be deferred to its proper place in the calendar while, in the meantime, the little girl goes to school.

During the Summer of 1831 Poe tried to alleviate the distressing conditions at the house in Milk Street, while he was still helping to nurse Henry, by competing for a $100 prize offered by the

412 There is some conflict about dates here, August 12, and August 22, 1822, are also given by family tradition. The church record is followed, from St. Paul's Parish Baltimore, see Woodberry, 1904, vol. I, page 137, note 1. The thanks of the author are also due to Mrs. Sally Bruce Kinsolving for making a search of the St. Paul's *Parish Records.*

Philadelphia Saturday Courier, a paper like the old *Saturday Evening Post.* The prize was for a short story. Poe submitted a number of tales but the award went to a Mrs. Delia S. Bacon for a story called *Love's Martyr.* Poe's effort was not entirely unsuccessful, however, for the editor accepted his *Metzengerstein* which appeared in the *Philadelphia Saturday Courier,* January 14, 1832. It was his first short story to be published (sic), and shows that he was turning his attention from poetry to the more lucrative field of prose. It is possible that without the merciless spur of poverty he might never have done so. In verse, the dreamer found his true dream within a dream — and received only a dreamful compensation.

The sale of a story in January, 1832, nevertheless, did not serve to put anything on the table through the Summer of 1831. Mrs. Clemm was probably under the necessity of going elsewhere than to the market with her market basket, a large wicker affair, vividly recollected by many who were repeatedly called upon to contribute to its contents, notably the Neilson Poes and the Herrings. Mrs. Clemm in her widow's cap and large motherly person, her broad benign face troubled with an eleemosynary woe, was wont to appear at irregular but disconcerting intervals, the basket upon her arm, her fine gray eyes yearning with stark anxiety, and a tale of dole upon her lips that would have drawn tears from the mask of Comedy. No one was proof against her; for what she had to say was always painfully true: Virginia was naked; "dear Eddie" was *so* ill; or old Mrs. Poe was about to die (had been about to die indeed for five years); she herself was a poor widow; Henry was drinking again; the fire had gone out — and there was nothing to eat! What could one do in her large, neat, appealing, and irrefutable presence? The only reply was a contribution to the basket. Its wide and insatiable mouth gaped darkly, engulfing a child's garment, a chicken, half a peck of potatoes, turnips, or loaves of bread — shut to the tune of her departing blessing, and it and the incident were both temporarily closed. But never completely so. It was impossible that the conjunction of all the ill luck which was so generously hers could ever end. Fortunately for a great poet, Mrs. Clemm had a knack.

a technique, indeed, which she soon acquired, of cutting under all intelligence and stabbing straight for the heart. She belonged in one part of her nature to that great, dark-garmented sisterhood that her own black widow's weeds recalled, those who are forever flitting from door to door reminding the conventionally prosperous that poverty, bastardy, and suffering are mysteriously present facts and that alms are in order. Much as, from innate respectability, she hated her rôle, Mrs. Clemm played it surpassingly well. She was in this respect a little half-sister of St. Francis. Her lips, her gestures, and her own sacrifices pleaded for starving old age, childhood, and irresponsible genius. Only editors could resist, and even they did so with tears. On several occasions Mrs. Clemm actually borrowed money from an anthologist. Charity records no more signal triumph.

Yet sometimes her greatest skill was in vain. On November 7, 1831, Edgar Allan Poe was arrested in Baltimore for a debt — "which I never expected to have to pay." [413] It was the $80, *probably* the note which he had endorsed for Henry, who was now free from all but celestial duns.[407] Edgar immediately wrote to John Allan. Prison was staring the young poet directly in the face. He was in bad health and he says he cannot undergo as much hardship as formerly. The debt laws in Baltimore were strict. One could then be confined for a debt of $5, and citizens of another town were not allowed the relief of bankruptcy. Besides, the debt was already two years old and it was Winter. "P. S.," he adds, "I have made every exertion but in vain." The letter was written on the eighteenth but it received no reply. Over two weeks later, on December 5, Mrs. Clemm seconded the appeal to Richmond in a heart rending letter to John Allan [414] that in both style and content does her credit. She had herself by some miracle raised $20, but that was not sufficient. She reminds Mr. Allan that Poe has no other place to which to appeal; says that besides this $80 he is not in debt; and closes by stating that the young man had been extremely kind to her as far as his opportunities

413 *Valentine Museum Letters,* letter No. 27, Baltimore, Maryland, November 18, 1831 (Thursday). See also note 407.

414 *Valentine Museum Letters,* letter No. 28.

would permit. There is some indication in this letter that Mr. Allan had "refused" to help Edgar, but it probably refers only to his long silence.

Ten days later Poe again writes to John Allan in sheer desperation. The prison door is evidently yawning. The letter is one of the most pitiable that a poet was ever forced to write to a patron.

Balt. *Dec.* 15th, 1831 [415]

DEAR PA,

I am sure you could not refuse to assist me if you were well aware of the distress I am in. How often have you relieved the distress of a perfect stranger in circumstances less urgent than mine, and yet when I beg and entreat you in the name of God to send me succour you will still refuse to aid me. I know that I have no longer any hopes of being again received into your favour, but for the sake of Christ, do not let me perish for a sum of money which you would never miss, and which would relieve me from the greatest earthly misery. . . .

Poe then contrasts the blessings of wealth and happiness which his guardian was then enjoying with his own terrible misery, and adds:

If you wish me to humble myself before you I am humble — Sickness and misfortune have left me not a shadow of pride. . . .

How differently he would act, were their situations reversed, is the burden of the letter's close. It reminds one of the last stanza of *Israfel.* Alas, for a poet in a world of sweets and sours so strangely portioned!

John Allan was not really so emotionally unassailable as this letter would indicate, although the accidental cause of events warranted Poe in thinking so. Mrs. Clemm, as we have seen, had written Mr. Allan on December 5, on the seventh, Mr. Allan had warranted John Walsh, a Baltimore correspondent of *Ellis & Allan* to "procure Poe's liberation and give him $20 besides to keep him out of further difficulties," but for some reason unknown, the merchant neglected to mail the letter until January 12, 1832. Mr. Allan was considerably troubled by this, an unusual

[415] *Valentine Museum Letters,* letter No. 29.

oversight on his part in a financial transaction, for he endorses on the back of Poe's letter of December 15. "Then put it in the (post) office myself." This letter, *written* two days later, was evidently intended to answer Mrs. Clemm's letter of the fifth.

In the meantime, of course, Poe knew nothing of all this. Christmas day, 1831, must have passed in an agony of suspense, and, on December 29, he again wrote to Richmond making a final curt appeal.[416] The letter begins "Dear Sir," and contains a reminder that it is from one who in old times once sat upon the knees which the writer is now forced to embrace. Some two weeks later Poe was probably startled by the unexpected intervention of Mr. Walsh. It was after the crisis was over.

What had happened is not exactly clear. Poe does not seem to have been actually imprisoned. Probably someone of the cousins intervened to save the family name from disgrace; the importunate creditors were prevented; and Edgar Poe was absolved from the misery of hearing the New Year's bells of 1832 ring through prison walls. For an underfed young man with a weak heart and a tendency toward melancholy, it was more than a fortunate escape — it was an extension of his lease on existence. The nadir had been reached.

The year 1832 still remains the most mysterious in the annals of Edgar Allan Poe. In many respects it is a blank, there is no correspondence covering the period, and his exact whereabouts during part of the time is open to reasonable doubt. The preponderance of evidence, however points to the fact that he was in the garret of Mrs. Clemm's Milk Street house, and that the stories which began to appear in 1833 in the *Baltimore Saturday Visitor, The Tales of the Folio Club,* and the *Coliseum* were under way there.[417] The short stories which appeared in the *Philadelphia*

[416] *Valentine Museum Letters,* letter No. 30.

[417] Several legends about Poe's going abroad in 1832, and of his being in Baltimore unknown to the Clemm's, exist. I have assembled the bulk of the material dealing with this year and considered all the correspondence before and after it, and all the circumstances implied. There is no genuine *evidence* to imply that Poe was not in Baltimore in 1832, and all the implications are that he was. The *Valentine Museum Letters* are silent but indicate, at the last, that Poe had remained in poverty in Baltimore. Mary Devereaux's story shows Poe very palpably *a year or two before* John Allan's death in 1834, and must necessarily cover part

Saturday Courier during 1832, of which there were five, probably represent the work of 1831.

Although it is impossible to present the events covering this "mysterious year" with any assurance as to the precise order of time in which they occurred, there is a considerable mass of evidence relating to the stay of Poe in Baltimore, some of which undoubtedly tends to fill in what has long remained more or less of a blank. Before touching on this, it should be stated that none of the traditions of this time indicate that the young poet was dissipated. The reliable facts, indeed, prove the reverse. He was, it seems, in ill health part of the time, probably caused by the weak heart that threatened to cease to beat altogether two years later, after the extreme poverty and deprivations that he was forced to undergo. It is now definitely known that absolutely no help was received from Richmond. The aid received from John Allan in January, 1832, was the last help he was ever to experience from that quarter.[418] Writing was Poe's sole resource.

Among other places where Poe is known to have been seen about this time was E. J. Coale's bookstore on Calvert Street, which he is said to have haunted, and Widow Meagle's Oyster Parlor on Pratt Street near Hollysworth. Here he met a sailor by the name of Tuhey who played the flute. The proprietress was a good-natured Irish woman who made much of the "Bard," as he

of the "mysterious" period. The amount of manuscript material which Poe had on hand a year or so later, taken together with the work that he is known to have done in 1831, shows that he must have been writing through 1832. Had he made all of the "voyages" and trips, been dying of fever, in jail, etc., etc., during this time, we would have some authentic record, or some real evidence about it. The blank simply means an unknown author hard at work on his manuscripts. The account given here has been put together with painstaking analysis, where surmise has been resorted to it is the result of the elimination of the impossible.

[418] As this statement contradicts that of all other biographers and Poe himself to John P. Kennedy, the reader is referred to the *Valentine Museum Letters* covering the second Baltimore period, 1831–1833, which show beyond peradventure that John Allan did *not* give Poe an "annuity." During the period, John Allan probably (sic) sent Poe a small gift in November, 1831, the $80 to save him from prison, too late, "and $20 besides." In his last letter to John Allan (Poe from Baltimore, April 12, 1833,) the latter says, "It is now more than two years since you have assisted me . . . three since you have spoken (written) to me." Poe would scarcely lie to John Allan about what Mr. Allan had done himself. Prof. Woodberry's contrary statements were made before the complete evidence was available.

was called. Persons who went there, afterward remembered hearing Poe recite his own poetry, and the flute playing of Tuhey beside the inn fire.[419] The Tavern was a resort of sea-faring men, and those who gathered there were wont to exchange stories. Poe was still forced, it appears, to wear various articles of his West Point uniform, partly from necessity, probably, and partly from desire. There is some tradition of his drilling the street gamins about the neighborhood of Fells Point, and the young lads of the vicinage were said to have been fond of him, and to have followed him whenever he went through the streets. The Baltimore Library, then at the corner of Holiday and Fayette Streets, seems also to have been a refuge, and to have provided the source for the many literary and historical gleanings that appeared a few years later in the *Southern Literary Messenger* as *Tid-bits*. There may have been some "flying visits" to Philadelphia when the purse permitted, probably to see the editors of the *Courier*.[420]

The chief event of this period, however, was a romantic affair with a Miss Mary Devereaux a neighbor of the Clemms. The recollections of that young lady were not contributed until about forty years afterward, so that the exact time which they covered cannot be definitely ascertained, but, from numerous indications, it appears that part of the events which she described took place during the year 1832.[417]

Mrs. Clemm's attic room looked out upon the rear of the houses upon Essex Street, in "Old Town." Poe was much in this attic, writing, and, as he looked out of the third story window one day, across the fluttering clothes in the backyards between Milk and Essex Streets, he noticed a pretty girl who wore her auburn hair in "frizzed puffs," as the style then was. She was sitting in the rear window of a house opposite. A handkerchief flirtation began in which another girl Mary Newman, who lived next door to Mary Devereaux on Essex Street, soon joined.[421]

[419] See J. H. Whitty's *Memoir*, large edition, page xxxv. There are also other accounts confirming this.

[420] This is conjectural, although there are some doubtful references to it by Mary Devereaux.

[421] It is said that Poe for awhile boarded at the Newmans, but Mary Devereaux's story indicates that he knew Miss Newman as a neighbor and lived at the Clemm's, whence Virginia carried notes.

The white signals were alluring, and soon led to a closer acquaintance. Both the girls knew that Poe was a young soldier and a poet, and their hearts as well as the handkerchiefs seemed to have been agitated. A battledore and shuttlecock game of kisses was soon being played with hands for rackets, until Mrs. Devereaux once inquired, " What takes you upstairs so much, Mary? "

One summer afternoon when Mary Devereaux and Mary Newman were seated talking together on their adjoining front stoop on Essex Street, with only a balustrade between them,[422] Edgar Poe passed " as usual " on his way home to Mrs. Clemm's.[421] The impressive Edgar stopped and bowed. Virginia it seems had already been sent to Mary Devereaux for a lock of the bright hair which had first attracted his attention. The favor had been granted. One can therefore imagine the excitement of the two Marys as the romantic figure of the Milk Street window actually seemed about to speak. " Do you know him? " whispered Mary Newman to Mary Devereaux. " No," replied Miss Devereaux lying valiantly despite the burning lock of hair. " Why, that's Edgar Poe who has recently came from West Point. He writes poetry, too. Why I declare! There he comes across the street. Oh! Isn't he handsome! " With a few omissions, perhaps " Poe's Mary " can best tell the rest of the story for herself.[422]

Mr. Poe, having crossed the street, came up the Newman's stoop. As he did so, I turned my back, as I was then young and bashful. He said ' How do you do, Miss Newman? ' She then turned and introduced him to me, and then happened to be called into the house. Mr. Poe immediately jumped across the balustrades separating the stoops, and sat down by me. He told me I had the most beautiful head of hair he ever saw, the hair that poets always raved about. . . . From that time on, he visited me every evening for a year, and during that time, until the night of our final lover's quarrel, he never drank a drop, as far as I know . . . Affectionate! . . . he was passionate in his love. . . . My intimacy with Mr. Poe isolated me a good deal. In fact my girl friends were many of them afraid of him and forsook me on his account. I knew more of his male friends. He despised ignorant people, and didn't like trifling and small talk. He didn't like dark-skinned people.

[422] The account here given, and the conversations are taken from *Poe's Mary* by Augustus Van Clef, *Harpers New Monthly Magazine,* March 1889, pages 634–640. Also see note 745.

When he loved, he loved desperately. Though tender and very affectionate, he had a quick, passionate temper, and was very jealous. His feelings were intense and he had but little control of them. He was not well balanced; he had too much brain. He scoffed at everything sacred and never went to church.[423] If he had had religion to guide him he would have been a better man. He said often that there was a mystery hanging over him he never could fathom. He believed he was born to suffer, and this embittered his whole life. *Mrs. Clemm also spoke vaguely of some family mystery, of some disgrace. . . .*[411] Mr. Poe once gave me a letter to read from Mr. Allan, in which the latter said, referring to me, that if he married any such person he would cut him off without a shilling.

Eddie and I never talked of his poetry then or in later years. He would not have done that; he would have considered it conceited. We were young, and only thought of our love. Virginia always carried his notes to me. . . . Eddie's favorite name was 'Mary,' he said. He used often to quote Burns, for whom he had a great admiration. We used to go out walking together in the evenings. We often walked out of the city and sat down on the hills.

One moonlight summer night we were walking across the bridge, which was not far from our house. At the other end of the bridge was a minister's house. Eddie took my arm and pulled me, saying. 'Come, Mary, let us go and get married; we might as well get married now as any other time.' We were then but two blocks from home. He followed, and came in after me. We had no definite engagement, but we understood each other. He was then not in circumstances to marry. When my brother found that Mr. Poe was coming so often he said to me: 'You are not going to marry that man, Mary? — I would rather see you in your grave than that man's wife. He can't support himself, let alone you.' I replied, being as romantic as Eddie was, that I would sooner live on a crust of bread with him than in a palace with any other man. . . . The only thing that I had against him was that he held his head so high. He was proud and looked down on my uncle whose business did not suit him. He always liked my father, and talked with him a good deal. . . .

One evening a friend of my brother's, a Mr. Morris, was visiting us. He knew that Mr. Poe's favorite song, which I often sang him, was

[423] This implied a much more definite philosophy at that time than now. To be "a free thinker" was a serious charge in 1832. The author has contemporary letters showing that young men who took Sunday walks had to hide the wild flowers they picked on such sinful rambles under their beaver hats on returning to town *or they would lose their jobs.* See *The Young Man's Sunday Book,* Philadelphia, Desilver, Thomas and Co., 1836, for some startling remarks on young men who do *not* go to church.

Come Rest in This Bosom. He asked me to sing it in order to tease Mr. Poe. I went to the piano to sing. Mr. Morris stood by me and turned the leaves. Mr. Poe walked with one hand behind his back, up and down the room, biting the nails of the other hand to the quick, as he always did when excited. He then walked over to the piano, and snatched the music and threw it on the floor. I said that it made no matter, and that I could sing the song without music, and did so. Mr. Morris, knowing me well called me 'Mary.' That also made Eddie jealous. He stayed after Mr. Morris left, and we had a little quarrel.

Our final lover's quarrel came about in this way: One night I was waiting in the parlor for Eddie, and he didn't come. My mother came into the room about ten o'clock and said, 'Come Mary, it's bed-time.' The parlor windows were open, and I lay with my head on my arms on one of the window sills. I had been crying. Eddie arrived shortly after my mother spoke to me, and he had been drinking. It was the only time during that year that I ever knew him to take anything. He found the front door locked. He then came to the window where I was, and opened the shutters, which were nearly closed. He raised my head, and told me where he had been. He said he had met some cadets from West Point when on his way across the bridge. They were old friends, and took him to *Barnum's Hotel,*[424] where they had a supper and champagne. He had gotten away as quickly as possible, to come and explain matters to me. A glass made him tipsy. He had more than a glass that night. As to his being an habitual drunkard, he never was as long as I knew him.

I went and opened the door and sat on the stoop with him in the moonlight. We then had a quarrel, about whose cause I do not care to speak.[425] The result was that I jumped past him off the stoop, ran around through an alleyway to the back of the house, and into the room where my mother was.

She said, 'Mary! Mary! what's the matter? '

Mr. Poe had followed me, and came into the room. I was much frightened,[425] and my mother told me to go upstairs. I did so.

Mr. Poe said, 'I want to talk to your daughter. If you don't tell her to come down stairs, I will go after her. I have a right to! '

My mother was a tall woman, and she placed her back against the door of the stairs, and said, 'You have no right to; you cannot go upstairs.'

[424] This hotel, *Barnum's,* was a famous Baltimore hostlery noted for its diamond-back terrapins, and canvas-back ducks "done rare." The place was built in 1827. The Post Office was on the ground floor. This was the end of the Philadelphia stage line, just then (1832) about to go out of business.

[425] "Mr. Poe" had evidently carried matters to extremes. The reader is asked to note this passage for future reference.

Mr. Poe answered, 'I have a right. She is my wife now in the sight of Heaven!'

My mother then told him he had better go home and to bed, and he went away.

He didn't value the laws of God or man. He was an atheist. He would just as lief have lived with a woman without being married to her as not. . . . I made a narrow escape in not marrying him. I don't think he was a man of much principle.

After the quarrel . . . I broke off all communication with Mr. Poe, and returned his letters unopened. My mother also forbade him the house. He sent me a letter by Virginia. I sent it back unopened. He wrote again, and I opened the letter. He addressed me formally as 'Miss Devereaux,' and upbraided me in satiric terms for my heartless, unforgiving disposition. I showed the letter to my mother, and she in turn showed it to my grandmother, who was then visiting us. My grandmother read it, and took it to my uncle James. My uncle was very indignant, and resented Mr. Poe's letter so much that he wrote him a very severe, cutting letter, without my knowledge. Mr. Poe also published at the same time in a Baltimore paper a poem of six or eight verses, addressed *To Mary*. The poem was very severe, and spoke of fickleness and inconstancy. All my friends and his knew whom he meant. This also added to my uncle's indignation.

Mr. Poe was so incensed at the letter he received that he bought a cowhide, and went to my uncle's store one afternoon and cowhided him. My uncle was a man of over fifty at the time. My aunt and her two sons rushed into the store, and in the struggle to defend my uncle tore his assailant's black frockcoat at the back from the skirts to the collar. Mr. Poe then put the cowhide up his sleeve and went up the streets to our house as he was, with his torn coat, followed by a crowd of boys. When he arrived at our house he asked to see my father. He told him he had been up to see his brother, pulled out my uncle's letter, said he resented the insult, and had cowhided him. I had been called down-stairs, and when Mr. Poe saw me, he pulled the cowhide out of his sleeve and threw it down at my feet, saying, 'There, I make you a present of that!'

Shortly after this exciting and melodramatic scene, the Devereauxs moved away from Baltimore [426] and did not come across Poe until many years later. There are one or two very significant things about Mary Devereaux's account, evidently by an uneducated but intelligent girl, it bears considerable weight as the direct

[426] To Philadelphia ———, and afterward to Jersey City.

evidence of one who knew him exceedingly intimately. The extreme difficulty of living with a man of Poe's nervous and excitable temperament needs little comment. It is a further testimony to Mrs. Clemm's everlasting affection and patience, while the picture of Virginia as a mere child and the bearer of love notes sets aside completely the absurd romantic rubbish that has been built up about this little maiden at that time.

Evidently she was a nice little schoolgirl in gingham and pigtails, who carried and fetched for big Cousin Eddie, probably with a mischievous thrill in the case of Mary Devereaux. This can scarcely mean that, " from the first Edgar Poe recognized in her the one over-powering affection of his heart." If he did so, asking her to trot around the block to fetch him a lock of red hair from Mary's was a passing strange way of manifesting his " soul's worship " for Virginia. It is quite obvious to all but the sentimentally purblind that the only " throne in the house of the great poet " occupied by his " *spiritu-el* cousin " was a chair at the table three times a day, when the state of Mrs. Clemm's larder permitted it. Mary says that Virginia was plump and hearty and a nice little schoolgirl with a pleasing disposition, " her chief charm." Perhaps, Mrs. Clemm had her plans, but of these, like a wise mother, she said nothing then, we may be sure.

The end of the affair with Mary was to be typical of several to follow later. She bears testimony that Poe was passionate. Evidently he meant to have what all men desire — " He didn't value the laws of God or man " — and the cause of the quarrel on the stoop Mary didn't care to talk about,[425] but it is also evident that the great excitement of sex, like all other " stimulants," completely unnerved Poe. He was never capable of remaining calm and collected, even rational enough, to overcome the normal and proper difficulties that stood between love and the prize. Before marriage was possible, the emotional pressure became so great that it exploded along some other paths, anger, jealousy, — exasperation of some kind, ending in sheer exhaustion and in later years followed by collapse. Uncle So and So was cowhided, the husband, or prospective mother-in-law fearful for the family real estate, with other relatives, became alarmed, and the world al-

ways heard about it later through the secondary literary manifestations of poems or tales of woe. Of course, the neighbors talked, and in Poe's case the gossip has become immortal.[427]

About the same time, when according to Mary, John Allan was threatening to cut Poe off without a shilling, in case he married her, that gentleman in Richmond was making his will. This ode on the intimations of mortality was drawn April 17, 1832, due to the fact that, since his visit to the Hot Springs in 1829, Mr. Allan's health had been steadily failing, and the "intimations" were now again assuming a dropsical turn.[428] Poe seems to have gotten wind of this. A printer by the name of Askew is known to have carried letters back and forth for Poe from Richmond.[429] The old servants in the house who had not forgotten either the old days nor "Marse Eddie," occasionally sent him news, or he may have heard through the Mackenzies, who were still intimate with Miss Valentine, of the doings at the big mansion. Rosalie Poe was still living with the Mackenzies.

There were a hundred motives to take Poe to Richmond. Aside from going "home," and that was much, the chance of a favorable reception by his "father" might mean the immediate relief of his desperate circumstances and a change in his entire future. Undoubtedly, too, there were other than mercenary motives. Perhaps, they would let him rest in his old room. "Aunt Nancy" would still be there, and after all "Pa" *had* saved him from prison. He must care a little. A rumor of the making of the will,[430] of Mr. Allan's ill health, or some chance kindly expression from John Allan may have been the deciding factor. We can be sure his heart was beating fast as he packed his bag and said good-bye to Mrs. Clemm. The steamboat left early.

It was sometime in June, 1832, when Poe arrived in Richmond after an absence of over two years.[431] The return to an old scene

[427] In Richmond, Baltimore, and Charlottesville Poe is still gossiped about as though he were still alive. Some of the legends are ingenious.

[428] John Allan had nearly died of dropsy in March, 1820. John Allan to Charles Ellis, London, March, 1820. *Ellis & Allan Papers.*

[429] Information given to the author in Richmond, July, 1925.

[430] Robert Cabell was one of the witnesses of the will. Young Robert Cabell was a close friend of Poe and may have been in touch with him.

[431] This date has been placed a year earlier and a year later by various biog-

revives all the familiar attitudes and emotions that go with it. The little Virginia capitol could scarcely have changed at all since he had left it, the very patterns of the vines on the walls of houses were old friends. It must have seemed impossible as he opened the gate of the well-known walk that he was not really "going home." All that lay about him was at the core of his dreams. Old "Dab," the butler, opened the door, and Poe told him to take the bag to "his room." It was not the gesture of presumption but the motion of old habit. At the same time he asked for Miss Valentine. She, it appears, must have been out, and the old butler informed him that "Marse Eddie's room" was now a guest chamber! There appears to have been some argument with old Dandridge about this. Poe regarded the room as his peculiar domain. His things, he thought, were still there.[432] The old darkey must have been in a quandary. Poe then asked for Mrs. Allan who came down to the parlor.

Here she found a young man, a stranger, acting like a member of the family. To her amazement, she found herself being reproached for having ordered her own house to suit herself. Poe on his part, as usual under the stress of great excitement, could not control his feelings and found himself reproaching "the strange woman" who seemed to have usurped Frances Allan's place. The voice of an "heir" upstairs did not tend to soothe him. It is said that even the child came in for some acrid remarks

raphers. The making of the will, and the known movements of Poe in 1831 and 1833, place it in 1832 by elimination. The birth of young William Galt Allan, after which, according to the Allan tradition, Poe appeared, seems to fix it about June. Poe could not have appeared "after the birth of the first child" as he is said to have done, as that was at a time when he is known to have been elsewhere.

[432] These, it appears, had been "moved out," a fact that enraged Poe. The story of this visit comes from two distinct angles; the legends according to the Allan tradition, and the version derived from the Mackenzies to whom Poe went immediately after the event. I have tried to reconstruct the incident taking into consideration the personalities involved and the standpoints from which the stories were afterwards told. Mrs. Susan Archer Weiss and others, afterward presented the Mackenzie-Poe version. For the Allan version see the letters of Miss Mayo and Colonel Ellis — also see Woodberry, 1909, vol. I, pages 95–96. The *Valentine Letters* show *no* indication of a visit in 1831. The only possible time was the early Summer of 1832. The second visit to the Allans took place shortly before Mr. Allan's death in 1834. Poe's memorandum to Griswold we now know refers to letters written and received at West Point. *Valentine Museum Letters,* Nos. 22–24.

on Poe's part, and that in his excitement he went so far as to hint that Mrs. Allan had not been without mercenary motives in marrying. The lady is said to have replied that, far from considering Poe a member of the family whose wishes were to be consulted in the plans of the household, she knew him to be nothing more than a mere pensioner on her husband's bounty. The interview was undoubtedly acrimonious and, no doubt, enormously exasperating to them both. To Mrs. Allan, Poe's presence must have been an insufferable reminder, and an assertion of the rights of the beloved foster-son of the first wife, that struck at the very basis upon which her own existence and her children's lives, for there were now two of them, must rest. She sent for Mr. Allan, who was at the office, and is said to have coupled her message with the assertion that " Edgar Poe and herself could not remain a day under the same roof." Poe was inclined for a moment to stand upon " his rights," and seems to have remained seated in the parlor, but the emphatic sound of the lame man's cane clicking up the walk, and the clump of a well-known foot was sufficient to change his mind if not his feelings. He crossed the hall to the front door about the same instant that John Allan let himself in by the side entrance.

Poe went to the Mackenzies, where he told his story. They were simple and kindly folk who understood. Rosalie was still there, and Jack Mackenzie his staunch boyhood friend. Rosalie had grown up, but she was still a little girl. Miss Valentine, who must have been out when Poe " called " at the big mansion, sent him money. The Mackenzies also probably contributed. After a short time Poe returned to Baltimore.

Then the Richmond gossip began. It was rumored that Poe had thrust himself past the butler and gone to Mrs. Allan's room where she lay in bed with a new born infant in her arms. There he had " reviled her and the child " and had been thrown out by the servants after which he threw stones at the house. Only the arrival of Mr. Allan had prevented goodness knows what! Poe must, of course, have been drunk. What could one expect of the son of actors, a mad poet, — after all Mr. Allan's kindness, too! A hundred eager Penelopes now took up the shuttle of rumor,

platting and unraveling the endless web of petty scandal, as the domestic knitting needles were laid aside, in order to weave the most delightful incident that had been suggested to designers along the James for years.

Before the shuttles were discarded, a whole grotesque panel in the tapestry of the adventures of Israfel was completed for the corridors of legend. It was such an intriguing work of art that it appeared later as a lunette in one of the side halls of history.

In the meantime, Mr. Allan's generosity had crystallized in his will in the form of certain codicils regarding the education of twin boys, on a side street in Richmond, who were now just two years old. Perhaps, the once beloved foster-son's indignation and the nervousness of the second Mrs. Allan had roots which even the longest knitting needle could not probe. Whatever may have been said between them that morning in the big octagon parlor, on Poe's part, the world was never the wiser. Others were not so reticent about him.[433]

The news of the outcome of the visit to Richmond could have brought very little cheer to the poverty-stricken hearth of Mrs. Clemm in Baltimore. If anything, Poe had only "succeeded" in making his alienation the more complete. John Allan never communicated with him (Poe) again, and Poe only attempted to do so once with him. There was nothing left but for the pen in the garret to scratch on and on, with only the most glimmering pros-

[433] The second Mrs. Allan and her family, together with Colonel Thomas Ellis and a certain social group in Richmond, later on became the source of much invidious anti-Poe propaganda. They had had the advantage of living after Poe died, when all fear of the devastating reply that he might have made was removed. Then the world was informed of Poe's ingratitude to his "generous benefactor," forgery, and the embezzlement of the substitute's money. At the time that these assertions were allowed to "emanate," the documents which disproved them were in the hands of those who originated the stories. Only two conclusions are possible; either these people fabricated the legends, or they were too purblind to understand the letters which they themselves possessed. Considerable authority was attached to their assertions as coming from persons who had personal knowledge of the facts, as well as documents to which biographers were denied all access. The impression grew that the real facts were scandalous — they were — but not about Poe. The story of Poe's visits to Richmond were the beginning of this kind of thing. It is now high time, a century later, to lift "the mysterious veil."

pects that the fine chirography of its industrious characters would ever be translated into print. There was a whole volume of stories at hand, the famous *Tales of the Folio Club.*

Meanwhile, at the Baltimore Library, the same pair of eyes were eagerly scanning the *Tales of Hoffman,* German Philosophy, largely in a denatured and secondary English form, foreign and American newspapers and magazines.

In the Autumn of 1832, there is a legend and some evidence that Poe made an ocean voyage as a sailor before the mast to the coast of Wexford in Ireland.[434] But both the legend and the evidence are uncertain. The incident remains to be proved, and the probabilities are that Poe remained in Baltimore. Henry Clemm may have accompanied Poe to Ireland, but Mary Devereaux says he went West, about this time. An old acquaintance and boyhood chum also removed from Richmond into an even vaguer beyond. In the Fall of 1832, Ebenezer Burling died of cholera in Richmond. Whether Poe heard about it then we do not know.

Edgar was much at his cousins' house as well as at the Clemms'. At the corner of Bounty Lane and Caroline Street lived a cousin, Mrs. Beacham, with several in her family. Here Poe was a frequent visitor, as well as at Mr. George Poe's house. A good deal of his time was spent at Mr. Henry Herring's on Asquith Street near Pitt. Mr. Herring was a prosperous lumber dealer and was able to afford a pleasant social background for his daughter. A circle of young girls met frequently at her house, and Poe seems to have been much in demand, reciting poetry, and writing in his cousin's album, a custom of the time which was so universal as to develop a distinct type of parlor literature. Poe seems to have been extremely fond of this Miss Herring, if not in love. She married a year or two later and left Baltimore to live in Virginia. The Cairnes, family relatives of old Mrs. David Poe, were also

[434] J. H. Whitty mentions this in his biographical sketch to the *Complete Poems,* Houghton Mifflin. The story comes from the memories of Poe's friend, F. W. Thomas, who said that he knew a sailor by the name of Tuhey, who played the flute, and that the sailor told him that Poe had gone with the said Tuhey to Ireland and back.

kindly and hospitable,[435] and there was a neighbor, a Mrs. Samuel F. Simmons, who was extremely kind. In recognition of this, she received some time later the manuscript of *Morella* in the neat scribal characters that mark it as part of *The Tales of the Folio Club*. About the same time, Poe was engaged in writing his only attempt at drama, *Politian*.

It is noticeable that most of the houses which Poe frequented were the homes and rendezvous of pretty young girls. In their company, rather than in the companionship of youths of his own age, he seems to have been most at home. With them he doubtless found himself the object of interest and considerable admiration, an atmosphere in which he expanded. Seated on the Empire sofas, just then beginning to go out of fashion, in a parlor adorned with *genre* pictures of the day, each conveying an obvious but edifying moral, he wrote sentimental poems in the red morocco, brass-bound and betasseled albums, or looked at the incredible flounced nymphs simpering from the pages of a genteel magazine, with the head of a living replica tantalizingly near. Then, with a faint rustle of ruffles and the twinkle of low-heeled, beaded cloth slippers, they would all gather about the piano where the candles would be lit in the little brass side-sconces, brightening white lace-covered hands that leapt along the keys. A certain young gentleman with soulful grey eyes turned the music, whose quaint notes as large as tadpoles wriggled their way through the faint-ruled lines of an old song. Outside the passerby paused to be quaveringly informed that a young lady within was extending a contralto invitation to *Come Rest in This Bosom*. Then there was currant cake and a little sweet elderberry wine. The conversation was in strict keeping with the refreshments. In winter time the black lumps of canal coal melted slowly in the arabesqued cast iron paunch of an urn-topped stove; *parchesi* draughts advanced or returned on candle lit square; the strange designs of dominoes grew and dissolved on deal tables, amid breathless giggles; and there was an ancient game, never

[435] According to F. W. Thomas, Tuhey, the sailor, was also a guest at this house and Poe was so much in love with one of the Cairnes girls that, when she refused him, he went to Ireland in despair. See note 419 for the source of this.

old, played with a handkerchief or a pillow. Baltimore, after all, had its relaxations. Above the monotone of poverty, if one listens carefully, can be heard the quaint grace notes of a thin piano and the whisper of skirts over carpets where the flowers of Victoria had not yet bloomed. Half a century later an old lady remembered a young man: [436]

Mr. Poe was about five feet eight inches tall, and had dark, almost black hair, which he wore long and brushed back in student style over his ears. It was as fine as silk. His eyes were large and full, gray and piercing. He was entirely clean shaven. His nose was long and straight, and his features finely cut. The expression about his mouth was beautiful. He was pale, and had no color. His skin was of a clear, beautiful olive. He had a sad, melancholy look. He was very slender . . . but had a fine figure, an erect military carriage, and a quick step. But it was his manner that most charmed. It was *elegant*.[437] When he looked at you it seemed as if he could read your thoughts. His voice was pleasant and musical but not deep. He always wore a black frock-coat buttoned up, with a cadet or military collar, a low turned-over shirt collar, and a black cravat tied in a loose knot. He did not follow the fashions, but had a style of his own. His was a loose way of dressing as if he didn't care. You would know that he was very different from the ordinary run of young men.

Thus, we get a fairly complete picture of Poe in the early 1830's. In the Fall of 1832, Mrs. Clemm moved from Milk Street to Number 3 Amity Street where she resided until the entire family left for Richmond in 1835. She was accompanied to the new dwelling by Virginia, "a handful of furniture," and her nephew Edgar, who, although nobody knew it but himself, was just on the threshold of fame.

[436] Mary Devereaux in 1888–9. *Harpers New Monthly Magazine*, December, 1889. See note 422, page 332.

[437] For a person born in the 1820's and reared in the decades that followed, "elegant" was the last word of praise. The word has lost its glory. "Elegance" was interred at Frogmore.

CHAPTER XVI
Bottled Fame

VERY scanty was the success that had met any of Poe's efforts, thus far, to obtain either sale or fame for the work of his pen. Here and there, one of his poems warmed someone capable of feeling the divine fire, and his immediate acquaintances spoke and thought of him as a poet. Beyond that, the three little books seemed to have dropped into a void. *Belles lettres,* it was only too painfully evident, would have led to the garret of Chatterton if it had not been for the garret of Mrs. Clemm. Poe, as we have seen, had therefore turned his efforts in a more marketable direction. The journalism of his time now commenced to claim his attention seriously, and he began to study the contemporary prints, both newspapers and magazines, especially the latter. The result was two-fold: he now earnestly began to write prose — during 1832, five of his tales, the first of his published short stories were published in the *Philadelphia Saturday Courier* where he had competed unsuccessfully for a prize, — the other facet of his immediate interest was the beginning of his theories about American magazines and literary criticism. In the meanwhile, the muse did not entirely languish, *The Coliseum,* at least, was underway and even an attempt at drama, *Politian.* What he lacked was some point of publishing contact. So far, he had not been able to accomplish that in Baltimore.[438] The stories, and the first three books of poems, together with the cruder attempts at short stories which Poe is said to have written at the University of Virginia and to have destroyed there, represented the results of the longings of his youth, and the later and riper harvest of his first creative urge. But for awhile, especially in the Winter of 1833, it looked as if the stories were to die as unnoted and as unlamented as the poems.

[438] It is said that he had published verses in Baltimore newspapers, but the evidence is doubtful.

It was remarkable that Poe had been able to complete this considerable volume of literary output during the harassed years between 1827 and 1833. It was more than remarkable, and speaks plainly for his overmastering desire to create, that he had been able to do anything at all. The Winter of 1833, in particular, must have been a starving time. There are many indications that the period of collapse and illness in New York was indicative of the too heavy drafts upon his physical capital. A disintegration seems to have followed, partly perhaps upon the lines which heredity dictated. A weak heart, which sometimes completely prostrated him, shattered nerves, and the beginnings of the conditions which afterward led to disturbed mental conditions, all played their several parts from now on. For, from the time of his escape from West Point, it is safe to say that he was never a completely well man.[439] There were, from now on, periods of vigor and creation; but there were also recurring and accentuated periods of collapse. Starvation, anxiety, disappointment, and dissipation all contributed to the final tragic result, only sixteen years later, in the same city where he had first found shelter with Mrs. Clemm.

During the Winter of 1833, Poe must have been much about the streets of Baltimore trying to pick up odd jobs. The newspapers, despite the efforts of Neilson Poe, had failed to take him on.

In all this year, there is only one letter to break the silence, and it speaks in the tones of despair. On April 12, 1833, Poe wrote his last letter to John Allan.[440] He says in it that Mr. Allan has not assisted him for over two years, nor " spoken " (written) to

[439] Prof. George E. Woodberry also dates the failure of Poe's health from about this time. See his *Life of Edgar Allan Poe,* 1909, vol. I, pages 122–123: " He had begun normal, healthy and well; at twenty-five he was no longer so, nor was he ever to regain sound health," etc.

[440] One of the most remarkable coincidences in the annals of literary correspondence is connected with this letter. On the very same day that Poe wrote this letter in Baltimore, April 12, 1833, perhaps at the same hour, John Allan in Richmond was endorsing on the back of another letter of Poe's, written from New York, February 21, 1831, the following: " April 12, 1833, it is now upwards of two years since I received the above precious relict of the Blackest Heart and deepest ingratitude, alike destitute of honor and principle every day" . . . etc., etc. The reader should compare letter No. 25 with letter No. 31 of the *Valentine Museum Letters,* a comparison that provides a strangely intimate glimpse into the past.

him for three, and that, although he has little hope of any answer, he cannot refrain from attempting to make one more attempt to interest his guardian. Poe says that he is utterly without friends and therefore without the means of obtaining employment, and that he is perishing, literally perishing for want of help. Yet, he adds pathetically, he is not idle, nor addicted to any vice, nor has he offended society in any way which should bring the fate of starvation upon him. " For God's sake pity me, and save me from destruction," was the last line that he ever wrote to his guardian. It reveals a soul in a waking nightmare and it received no reply.

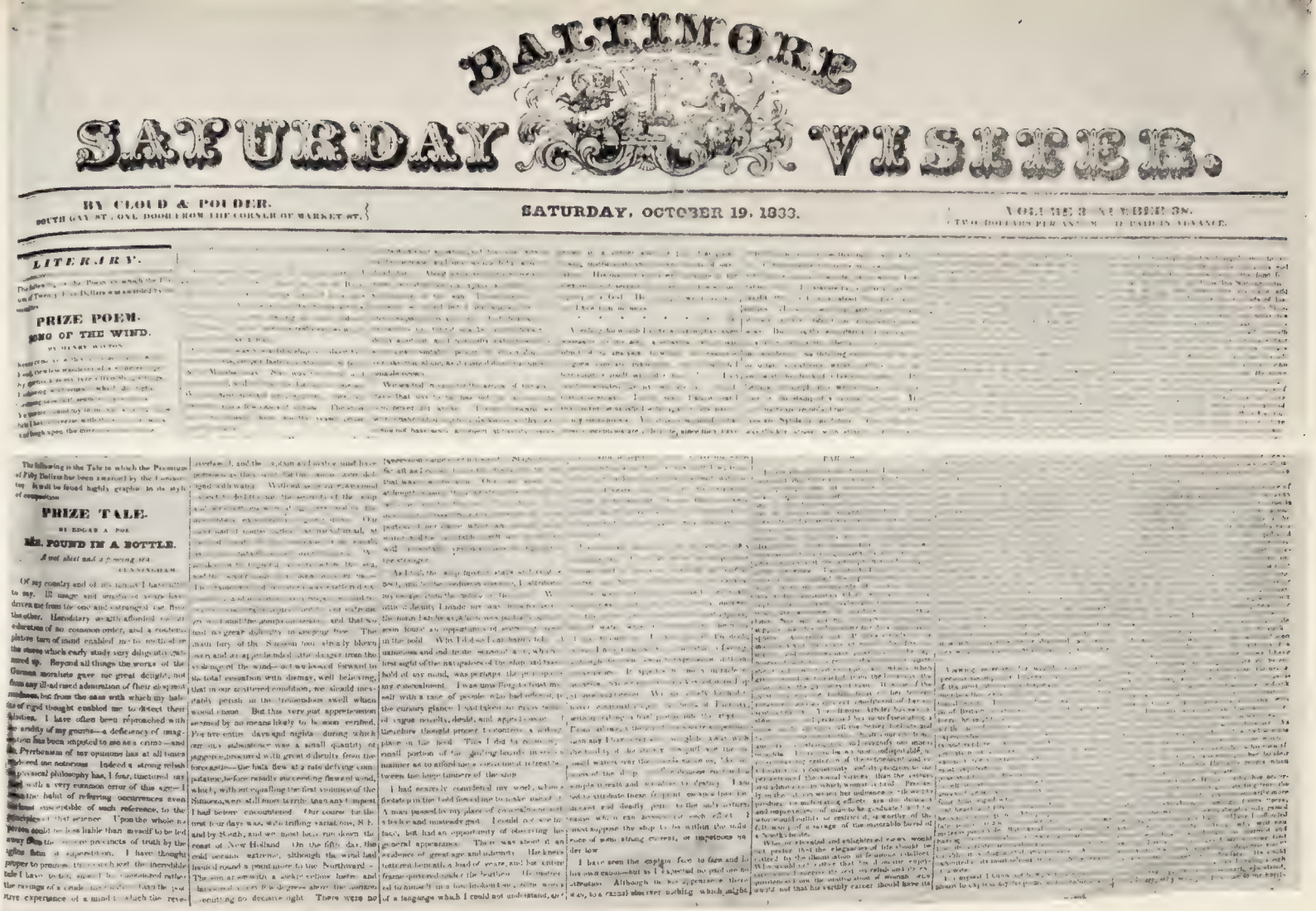
John Allan, indeed, was on the verge of a country where no postman could follow him. His dropsy was fast gaining upon him. During the Winter and Spring of 1833, he was, from time to time, engaged in writing various codicils in his will, the nature of which were so intimate that he employed his own handwriting in order to avoid the necessity of witnesses. In March, one of the illegitimate twins had died [441] which required further alteration in his will, but the removal of this claim on " charity " did not induce him to extend it to another claimant in Baltimore who had at least a moral hold on his interest.

Towards the end of July, Mr. and Mrs. Allan, Miss Valentine, two baby boys, two nurses, two drivers, five horses, and two carriages, all set out for Virginia Hot Springs in considerable style. One of the babies, Willie Galt, was teething; and Mr. Allan himself was almost helpless from dropsy, yet not too weak to take a considerable pleasure in the important figure which he cut. " In fact," said he, " we made quite a little cavalcade." [442] He had attained all that the world could give him, wives, concubines, children, slaves, horses and the envy of his neighbors.[443] The note of

[441] See the statements in the will of John Allan, Appendix, or page 359 this chapter.

[442] Information gleaned from various items and letters in the *Ellis & Allan Papers*.

[443] Despite the " swank " attached to " The Springs," an English traveler a year later, 1834, informs us that " The Springs " were incredibly crude and uncomfortable. A Mr. Fry and his son, both great dancers kept the place. The food was disgusting, the meat was carved by Mr. Fry himself, dressed in a dirty blue smock, who made a point of dropping the knife to escort ladies to their seats on his arm. There were not enough " servants," *i.e.*, slaves, and guests were awakened early in the morning by throat-clearing, shouts for hot water, and



BALTIMORE

SATURDAY VISITER.

BY CLOUD & POUDER.
SOUTH GAY ST., ONE DOOR FROM THE CORNER OF MARKET ST.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 19, 1833.

VOL. I. NO. 1. NEW SERIES. NO. 38.
TWO DOLLARS PER ANNUM IF PAID IN ADVANCE.

LITERARY.

PRIZE POEM.

SONG OF THE WIND.

BY HENRY WALTON.

PRIZE TALE.

BY EDGAR A. POE.

MS. FOUND IN A BOTTLE.

A wet sheet and a flowing sea
CUNNINGHAM.

Part of a Page on which Poe's prize story of "The MS. Found in a Bottle" first appeared

This was his first decided success

From a very rare file of the Saturday Visitor. *Courtesy of the Baltimore Historical Society*



Street Scene in Baltimore of the 1830's

Showing a street scene of about a century ago in Poe's day

From an old print

Courtesy of the Maryland Historical Society

satisfaction is strong, but the cavalcade was nearing the end of the journey. In the meantime, a young man in Baltimore, who had refused at a great price to become an appendage of the caravan had definitely started on the career which has caused the little domestic procession over the Virginia hills to be remembered.

In July, 1833, the *Baltimore Saturday Visitor,* an ephemeral weekly newspaper then edited by a Mr. L. A. Wilmer with considerable local success, offered a prize of $50 for the best short story and $25 for the best poem to be submitted within a given time.[444] The judges appointed by the editor were John P. Kennedy, Dr. James H. Miller, and J. H. B. Latrobe, who has left us the story of what happened:

> We met one pleasant afternoon in the back porch of my house on Mulberry Street, and seated round a table garnished with some old wine and good cigars, commenced our critical labors. As I happened to be the youngest of the three, I was required to open the packages of prose and poetry, respectively, and read the contents. Alongside of me was a basket to hold what we might reject.
>
> I remember well that the first production taken from the top of the prose pile was in a woman's hand, written very distinctly, as indeed, were all the articles submitted, and so neatly that it seemed a pity not to award it a prize.[445]
>
> It was ruthlessly criticized, however, for it was ridiculously bad — namby-pamby in the extreme and of the school known as the *Laura Matilda* school. . . . Of the remaining productions I have no recollection. Some were condemned after a few sentences had been read. Some were laid aside for consideration — not many. These last failed to pass consideration afterwards, and the committee had about made up their minds that there was nothing before them to which they would

the sound of slops being poured from the windows. The beds did not permit a night's undisturbed rest. Sanitary conditions were those of the frontier. Only Virginia chivalry could survive the roads. A plague of flies added the last delightful touch.

[444] The statement of the amount of the prize has often been wrongly given heretofore as $100. It was, as a matter of fact, $50 for a story, and half that for a poem; Mr. Latrobe himself, one of the judges, afterwards misstated the amount which biographers have followed.

[445] In his egregious sketch of Poe, Dr. Rufus W. Griswold afterward tried to rob Poe of all credit in this matter by stating that the prize was awarded to the best written manuscript in point of penmanship. This was a sneer at Poe's beautiful Roman holograph of the *Folio Club Tales.*

award a prize, when I noticed a small quarto-bound book that had until then accidentally escaped attention, possibly because so unlike, externally, the bundles of manuscript that it had to compete with. Opening it, an envelope with a motto corresponding with one in the book appeared, and we found that our prose examination was still incomplete. Instead of the common cursive manuscript, the writing was in Roman characters — an imitation of printing.

I remember that while reading the first page to myself, Mr. Kennedy and the Doctor had filled their glasses and lit their cigars, and when I said that we seemed at last to have a prospect of awarding the prize, they laughed as though they doubted it, and settled themselves in their comfortable chairs as I began to read. I had not proceeded far before my colleagues became as much interested as myself. The first tale finished I went to the second, then to the next and did not stop till I had gone through the volume, interrupted only by such exclamations as ' Capital! ' ' Excellent! ' and the like from my companions. There was genius in everything they listened to; there was no uncertain grammar, no feeble phraseology, no ill-placed punctuation, no worn truisms, no strong thought elaborated into weakness. Logic and imagination were combined in rare consistency. . . . There was an analysis of complicated facts — an unravelling of circumstantial evidence that won the lawyer judges — an amount of accurate scientific knowledge that charmed . . . a pure classic diction that delighted all three.

When the reading was completed there was a difficulty of choice. Portions of the tales were read again, and finally the committee selected *A Ms. Found in a Bottle.* One of the series was called *A Descent into the Maelström,* and this was at one time preferred . . . all the circumstances of the selection ultimately made have been so often since referred to in conversation that my memory has been kept fresh, and I see my fellow judges over their wine and cigars, in their easy chairs — both genial, hearty men, in pleasant mood, as distinctly now as though I were describing an event of yesterday. . . .

Refreshed by this most unexpected change in the character of the contributions, the committee refilled their glasses and relit their cigars, and the reader began upon the poetry. This, although better in the main than the prose, was bad enough, and, when we had gone more or less thoroughly over the pile of manuscript, two pieces only were deemed worthy of consideration. The title of one was *The Coliseum,* the written printing of which told that it was Poe's. The title of the other I have forgotten, but upon opening the accompanying envelope, we found that the author was Mr. John H. Hewitt.[446] I am not prepared to say that

[446] Mr. Hewitt's poem was entitled *The Song of the Winds* under a pen-name — " Henry Wilton."

the committee may not have been biased in awarding the (poetry) prize to Mr. Hewitt by the fact that they had already given the (prose) . . . prize to Mr. Poe. I recollect, however, that we agreed that, under the circumstances, the excellence of Mr. Hewitt's poem deserved a reward, and we gave the smaller prize to him with clear consciences. I believe that up to this time not one of the committee had ever seen Mr. Poe. . . .

Not long afterward the *Saturday Visitor* for October 12, 1833, appeared with the following notice that must have come to Poe's eye with almost the relief of a reprieve.

. . . Amongst the prose articles were many of various and distinguished merit, but the singular force and beauty of those sent by the author of *The Tales of the Folio Club* leave us no room for hesitation in that department. We have accordingly awarded the premium to a tale entitled *The Ms. Found in a Bottle*. We cannot refrain from saying that the author owes it to his reputation, as well as to the gratification of the community to publish the entire volume. These tales are eminently distinguished by a wild, vigorous, and poetical imagination, a rich style, a fertile invention, and varied and curious learning.

Signed JOHN P. KENNEDY
J. H. B. LATROBE
JAMES H. MILLER

In the same number in which this notice appeared, the prize story was published.

At a time when prizes for literary effort are so many and various as to have almost ceased to attract attention, the significance of this award can scarcely be appreciated. Not only was the cash itself supremely grateful, but, for the first time, the attention of a fairly large public was now focused upon Poe, for the news of the award was not confined to the pages of *The Visitor*. Poe had at last emerged from the shadow of the wings. The limelight had been definitely focused upon him, and, from this time on, his various entrances and exits on the literary stage, although they were not always accompanied by applause, were nevertheless followed by the magic glare. Perhaps of more immediate importance was the fact that he had gained some influential friends. Among the most important and constant of

these was a benevolent and wise gentleman, then a well-known Baltimore author, John P. Kennedy, Esquire.[447]

The Monday after the announcement of the award in the *Saturday Visitor* was used by Poe to call upon all the members of the committee in order to thank them. Mr. C. F. Cloud,[448] the owner and publisher of the paper, had, it seems, already called on Mr. Kennedy on Sunday morning and given him such an account of the young author that the good gentleman's curiosity and sympathy were both thoroughly awakened. When Poe was introduced next day, he was cordially received, and the interesting reports about him fully confirmed by his conversation and appearance. He was invited to return to the house, then one of the most important from a literary as well as a social point of view in Baltimore — in short, in a limited but very definite and helpful way, Mr. Kennedy became Poe's patron. Never was a young poet more in need of one.

An hour or so after the call upon Mr. Kennedy, Poe introduced himself to Mr. Latrobe, another one of the judges, in his office.[449] From him comes a full and interesting account of the interview:

> I was seated at my desk on the Monday following the publication of the tale, when a gentleman entered and introduced himself as the writer, saying that he came to thank me as one of the committee, for the award in his favor. Of this interview, the only one I ever had with Mr. Poe, my recollection is very distinct, indeed, — He was if anything, below the middle size, and yet could not be described as a small man. His figure was remarkably good, and he carried himself erect and well, as one who had been trained to it. He was dressed in black, and his frock coat was buttoned to the throat, where it met the black stock, then almost universally worn. Not a particle of white was visible. Coat, hat, boots, and gloves had evidently seen their best days, but so far as mending and brushing go, everything had been done apparently, to make

[447] *Swallow Barn* was Mr. Kennedy's *magnum opus*. His kindness to Poe is his only genuine claim to literary remembrance. His work was like its author, urbane and impeccable. He commanded at one time a considerable and highly respectable public, especially in Baltimore. He is also "remembered" for *Horseshoe Robinson*.

[448] Descendants of Mr. Cloud in Catonsville, Maryland, have the only complete file of the *Baltimore Saturday Visitor* extant, I am informed by a Baltimore collector.

[449] The Mechanics Bank Building — later.

them presentable.[450] On most men his clothes would have looked shabby and seedy, but there was something about this man that prevented one from criticising his garments, and the details I have mentioned were only recalled afterwards. The impression made, however, was that the award in Mr. Poe's favor was not inopportune. Gentleman was written all over him. His manner was easy and quiet, and although he came to return thanks for what he regarded as deserving them, there was nothing obsequious in what he said or did. His features I am unable to describe in detail. His forehead was high, and remarkable for the great development at the temple. This was the characteristic of his head, which you noticed at once, and which I have never forgotten.[451] The expression of his face was grave, almost sad, except when he became engaged in conversation, when it became animated and changeable. His voice I remember was very pleasing in its tone and well modulated, almost rhythmical, and his words were well chosen and unhesitating. . . . I asked him whether he was then occupied with any literary labor. He replied that he was then engaged on *A Voyage to the Moon,* and at once went into a somewhat learned disquisition upon the laws of gravity, the height of the earth's atmosphere, and capacities of balloons, warming in his speech as he proceeded.[452] Presently speaking in the first person, he began the voyage . . . leaving the earth, and becoming more and more animated, he described his sensation as he ascended higher and higher . . . where the moon's attraction overcame that of the earth, there was a sudden *bouleversement* of the car and great confusion among its tenants. By this time the speaker had become so excited, spoke so rapidly, gesticulating much, that when the turn upside-down took place, and he clapped his hands and stamped with his foot by way of emphasis, I was carried along with him. . . . When he had finished his description he apologized for his excitability, which he laughed at himself. The conversation then turned upon other subjects, and soon afterward he took his leave. . . .

In his calls on the judges, Poe did not forget Dr. James Miller with whom he also struck up an acquaintance that later led to some letters between them. The friendship with Lambert Wilmer, the editor of the *Visitor* was kept up for some time. He and Poe discussed together the founding of a magazine in Baltimore and were evidently fairly intimate. It was the first of the many maga-

[450] So much for Mrs. Clemm!

[451] Phrenology was then taken in all seriousness.

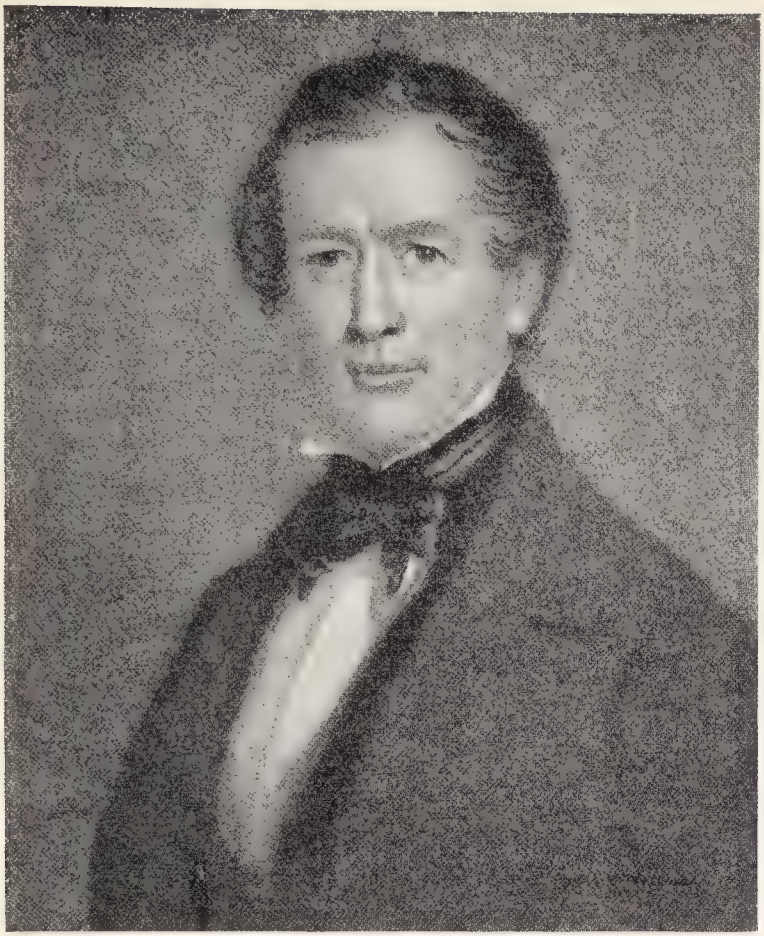
[452] See Chapter IX, page 131.

zine projects which from this time on became a preoccupation with Poe and absorbed much of his thought and energy. Two items were always lacking in these schemes to found the great American periodical; *i.e.*, capital, and stability in the character of the proposed managing editor.

Wilmer describes Poe as the "most passionless" of men that he ever knew. His opinion seems to have been based for the most part on Poe's writing and an innate delicacy in his friend which he mistook for lack of vigor. As he must have known of the horse-whipping incident, which raised not a little dust in the neighborhood, his statement cannot have the force which the words alone would imply. Wilmer was doubtless soon sorry enough that the poetry prize had been given to Hewitt, for that young gentleman soon worked himself into the good graces of the owner of the paper, Mr. C. F. Cloud, and usurped the editor's chair. Wilmer was forced to leave Baltimore in 1834, penniless and on foot. The prospectus with which Poe provided him, outlining the plan for a magazine to be published in Baltimore, fell by the wayside.[453] The "*bouleversements*" of the fly-by-night journalism of the time were generally sudden and often merciless and tragic, as Poe himself was to find out later. Even the modicum of humanity, usually embodied in the ethics of an organized profession was still lacking.

Hewitt's complication with Wilmer did not, however, prevent Poe from becoming close friends with the former. The two poets were in a sense rivals, Hewitt had once been on the staff of the *Minerva and Emerald* which had handed *Al Aaraaf* so nonchalantly, but their mutual interest in poetry seems to have brought them together frequently. There were long rambles in the country about Baltimore during which literature was the topic of conversation, and Hewitt has left us a picture of Poe in Byron collars and a black stock, one who "looked the poet all over." Yet all this did not prevent Poe, when the occasion offered, from explaining just how it was that Hewitt had received the prize. After Wilmer left, the columns of *The Visitor* do not seem to have been so hospitable

[453] When Wilmer left Baltimore, Poe sent him a prospectus for a Baltimore magazine. It was the first of many similar schemes.



John P. Kennedy

Poe's Baltimore Patron, author of *Horseshoe Robinson*, *Swallow Barn*, etc. Member of Congress, attorney, and famous host

After a painting by Wilson

Courtesy of the English Bookman



Author of "Ten Nights in a Bar-Room"

A friend of Poe in Baltimore

From an etching in Godey's Lady's Book *for 1844*

to Poe. That paper fell later into the hands of T. S. Arthur,[454] who in turn yielded to Dr. J. E. Snodgrass, the physician who was Poe's friend to the last. It was thus peculiarly linked with Poe's name, and with all of those connected with it he was for long, then and afterward, more or less associated. Lambert Wilmer remembered Poe particularly well:

> . . . His time appeared to be constantly occupied by literary labors; . . . he lived in a very retired way with his aunt Mrs. Clemm, and his moral deportment as far as my observations extended was altogether correct. . . . In his youthful days Poe's personal appearance was delicate and effeminate, but never sickly or ghastly, and I never saw him in any dress which was not fashionably neat with some approximation to elegance. Indeed, I often wondered how he could continue to equip himself so handsomely, considering his pecuniary resources were generally scanty and precarious enough. My intercourse with Poe was almost continuous for weeks together. . . . His general habits at that time were strictly temperate, and but for one or two incidents I might have supposed him to be a member of the cold-water army. . . .

" The one or two incidents " were the occasion of the cadets' supper at the *Barnum Hotel* and a singular instance when Poe took Wilmer home and offered him some Jamaica rum after the universal custom of the time. Aside from these, there is no authentic, indeed not any attempt, to indicate drinking episodes during the entire period of the poet's residence in Baltimore. He was, as a matter of fact, unusually abstemious for a young man of the time much about a convivial Southern town.

During the time of Poe's stay in Baltimore, from 1831 to 1835, there were two distinct literary groups in the city. The first of these gathered about John P. Kennedy, William Gwynn, and others of the old " Tusculum " Club. These were more literary than journalistic. The second group consisted of men, then only beginning to be known as writers, such as Arthur, Brooks, Dawes, Carpenter, Hewitt and MacJilton. These represented rather ably the various tendencies in cheap verse, magazine stories, and the more " popular " writing of the time. Their names are to be found frequently associated with that of Poe in the newspapers

[454] See the portrait included in this volume.

and magazines of the period, and the decades to follow, and they were, at least during his lifetime, in some sense his rivals. It was from the first group that Poe, for the most part, received his inspiration and his aid, principally from John P. Kennedy. The inference cannot reasonably be avoided that it was Mr. Kennedy who really smoothed the path, not only by advice and influence, but by actual physical help. He was one of the few friends that Poe kept to the very end, one to whom he was permanently grateful.

The suggestion that the remaining *Tales of the Folio Club* should be published, was not lost upon Poe, and towards the end of 1833 he seems to have gone personally to Philadelphia, to try to prevail on his old acquaintance Carey & Lea to bring out the collection of tales to which others, it appears, were later added. Mr. Kennedy's help was probably largely instrumental. In addition to this, *Gody's Lady's Book* was induced to accept one of the series, *The Visionary,* which appeared in the issue of that magazine for January, 1834.

Nevertheless, the last months of 1833, and the greater part of 1834, was a starving time for Poe in the little two-story brick house with a dormer window and double chimneys on Amity Street. Mrs. Clemm's basket must have frequently made the rounds for requisitions, her needle could not be busy enough. At one time she is said to have tried to eke things out by teaching school. With nothing but prospects in view, the Winter of 1833 came to an end for the Poe-Clemm household in Baltimore. It had been a memorable year, the path ahead was smoother and brighter. It was the question of continuing to exist, until the editorial barriers were passed, that was now most perplexing. In the meanwhile, Virginia was entering upon womanhood, propinquity was at work, and a cousinly affection was ripening into something more definite. With the opening of the new year the rumor of an approaching event, in which Poe could not help but be vitally interested, claimed his presence at Richmond. John Allan was dying.

Sometime during the latter part of the Winter of 1833, probably in February, Poe, therefore, again found himself before the

familiar mansion in Richmond with the firm intention of having an interview with "Pa." His object must have been to plead his "rights," and to make plain his necessities; perhaps, once and for all to explain away all differences and, in the forgiving mood which he might expect to find at a death-bed, to be received again as a son who could hope to share in the benefits of affection. Evidently he had been reliably warned that the end was near, and there was a chance, even in the remote possibility of a reconciliation, which he could not afford to neglect. All the memories of a lifetime, and the vital element of self-interest combined to make a motive powerful enough to cause him to try to force his way into the house where his last reception could leave no doubt as to the nature of his welcome as a member of the family.

After the visit of the Spring before, the servants had doubtless been instructed by both their master and their mistress how to receive "Marse Eddie." But prophetic foresight here seems to have been of little avail. Poe arrived, is said to have thrust himself past the butler, and to have run upstairs to the big front room overlooking the lawn. Mr. Allan was seated, with his cane beside him, propped up with pillows, and reading a newspaper. He was helpless from dropsy. The lines of youthful and amused irony that had once given him an almost sweet expression about the mouth, had long ago faded, and the hawk face and black eyebrows lowered menacingly at the lines of the daily news. Suddenly the small piercing eyes looked over the edge of the *Richmond Whig,* and beheld in the doorway an apparition from the past. The young foster-son was standing there as if the years had rolled back, gazing appealingly at his "father," and, as always in that presence, looking ill at ease. For a moment they must have stared thus at each other, these two strongly opposed spirits, for the last time. Then Poe tried to make some advances to the older man, probably pitiful enough, — he tried to come into the room. As if he were being attacked, John Allan seized the cane by his armchair and flourished it in the air. A torrent of imprecations and reproaches rolled from his lips. He threatened to beat Poe if he approached him, rising up in his invalid's chair like a dying eagle, dangerous, implacable, and able to strike till the

last. His cries brought his startled wife and the servants to the room, and Poe was ignominiously thrust by the slaves from the door. One can imagine the invalid trembling and exclaiming, and the young poet returning to Baltimore, sorrowful and shaken, even to the roots of his ego, by the spectacle and the strange fact, of someone who hated him to the last. Had either of them cared less, the last infernal scene would have been impossible. Devastating demonstrations are not manifested by indifference.

It is now time to relate the passing of the man whose shadow of influence lies across the life of Poe from first to last. Edgar's visit to Richmond may well have hastened the end. That the intimations of his departure had lain heavily upon John Allan for almost two years, the dates, and the nature of his will, show clearly. In December, 1833, he was busy winding up the affairs of *Ellis & Allan* with his old partner, Charles Ellis. Poe's visit to Richmond followed a few weeks later, after which time Mr. Allan failed rapidly. On March 19, Miss Valentine stopped in at *Ellis & Allan* to tell the clerks that Mr. Allan "was a very sick man." About a week later the end came. At eleven o'clock on the morning of March 27, 1834, Mrs. Allan was in her husband's chamber attending to some of the duties of the sickroom, when a terrified scream from her brought the family and the servants hurrying in. John Allan had died suddenly in his easy-chair. The jaw had dropped. Up until the very last instant of life it had remained absolutely firm. There was only one thing that he could not overcome.

Even about the semblance of the man who sat there propped up amid the pillows, there must have been something tremendous. The hands which had, at last, relaxed had never relented, and even after death they reached out strongly into time. By every worldly standard John Allan was a success. He had begun with nothing, but he died in full possession of ample monies, a handsome mansion, broad fertile acres, — the arbiter, and absolute master of over half a hundred human souls.[455] Two ladies of

[455] Slaves, immediate family, and a host of relatives in Scotland. See his own, and the will of William Galt, Appendix III.

considerable force, beauty, and attainments had been his wives; at least two other women had shared his favors; he was the father of seven children [456] for his second wife was pregnant when he died. Of all those upon whom the dominant shadow of his personality had so heavily fallen, Edgar Allan Poe, was the only one that had completely eluded him. That John Allan is remembered by the one and only item that he failed to completely possess, is a comment which a generation that ignored irony failed to understand. The influence which finally relaxed the grasp of the Scotch merchant on the twenty-seventh of March, 1834, was a powerful one. It is no wonder that Mrs. Allan screamed.

The will, in which there was not even an allusion to Poe, was a curious human and quasi-legal document containing clauses which throw a new light on the troubles that had long disturbed the Allan household, troubles in which the foster-son had played such an important part. There were, it now appears, a disconcerting number of children to provide for, and a domestic situation already so perplexing that the testator might well overlook a mere foster-child (who had merely been raised as the son of his bosom) in favor of those who were of his own blood. But, even of that motive, no one can be certain. If the intentions of the testator were benign, they were also unfortunately obscure, for both the grammatical and legal phraseology of the will were so faulty [457] as to arouse the justifiable suspicion that it was meant to protect the posthumous reputation of the testator rather than to confer benefits upon the legatees. Whatever the motives or the intentions, they were not carried out. The widow refused to abide by the will itself, and, in a long and scandalous litigation, carried her case to the State Supreme Court, where she successfully established her intestate rights. To the proud and firm minded relict, who buried her husband in Shockoe Cemetery at noon, sharp, on Saturday the twenty-ninth of March, 1834, the sorrow of his taking off was somewhat mitigated by certain considerations to

[456] Edwin Collier, twin sons and a daughter by Mrs. W., two sons by his second wife, and a posthumous daughter. Mr. Allan never "acknowledged" the daughter by Mrs. W., but left her and her mother jointly $3000. See the will.

[457] For a legal analysis of the will, see Appendix III.

which the world at large was not then privy. The nature of these was revealed in his will: [458]

In the name of God, Amen: I John Allan, of the City of Richmond, being of sound mind and disposing memory, do make and ordain this my last will and testament, revoking all other wills by me heretofore made. (*Then follow items, and a provision constituting his beloved wife, Louisa Gabriella Allan, James Galt, and Corbin Warwick, executrix and executors. This part of the will is dated April 17, 1832, and is witnessed by Th. Nelson, M. Clark, and Robert L. Cabell. On December 31, 1832, in a second section of the will without witnesses, the intent of the first part of it was reiterated with some curious additions:*)

Mrs. Louisa Gabriella Allan, wife of John Allan
John Allan, child and 1 *enseignt*
(.....)
1st pay all my debts.
2nd. My whole estate to be kept under the management of my exors, hereinafter mentioned until my eldest child becomes of age, the house and all the ground contiguous and attached to the same, I hereby authorize and empower my executors, or such of them as may act, to sell if they shall think it advisable after the expiration of 5 years from this date, also lot at intersection of F and 2nd Street, opposite Mr. Ellis's . . . $\frac{1}{3}$ of the net annual income of my whole estate to be paid to my beloved L. G. A. during her natural life or until my eldest child becomes of age. At the division of my estate I desire that my wife shall have one-third of my estate for life. . . .

To Miss Ann Moore Valentine $300 per annum and her board lodging and washing to be paid and found her out of my estate during her natural life, and this provision is to be in lieu of $2000 which I hold of her money, and of which my estate is to be discharged if she accepts this bequest.[459] To each of my sisters Nancy Fowlds, Jane Johnston, Elizabeth Miller £300 Sterling, and to my sister Mary Allan £100 Sterling, all residing in Scotland.[460] I devise the whole of my estate among my children which may be alive at the time of my death and of such as my wife may at that time prove to *ensignt*, in case they should be all boys I then desire that the estate may be equally divided among them in case of the birth of a daughter or daughters then I desire that

[458] The part of John Allan's will given here and the complete text given in the appendix are from a certified copy supplied the author by Mr. Charles O. Saville, Clerk of the Chancery Court of the City of Richmond, Virginia.

[459] This money had been left to Miss Valentine by William Galt in 1825. See his will, Appendix III.

[460] See Chapter III, and Chapter V, for other mention of these relatives.

my son or sons as the case may be shall be entitled to double what my daughters may have, my children to take the part of such of them as may die under age. In case of the death of all my children without being married or arriving at the age of 21 years I then give and devise to my relations Wm. Galt & Jas. Galt and to Corbin Warwick and to their heirs, exors, and administrators all the estate given to my children . . . the remaining $\frac{1}{5}$ part I wish disposed of in such manner as I may hereafter appoint by codicil. I desire that my executors shall out of my estate provided give to ———— a good english education for two boys sons of Mrs. Elizabeth Wills, which she says are mine, I do not know their names, but the remaining fifth, four parts of which I have disposed of must go in equal shares to them of (*or*) the survivor of them but should they be dead before they attain the age of 21 years their share to go to my sister's Fowlds children in equal proportions with the exception of three thousand dollars, which must go to Mrs. Wills and her daughter in perpetuity.

JOHN ALLAN, *Dec.* 31st, 1832

This memo. in my handwriting is to be taken as a codicil and can easily be proven by any of my friends.

The notes preceding are in the handwriting of my friend, Jno. G. Williams.

The twins were born sometime about the 1st of July 1830. I was married the 3rd October 1830 in New York, my fault therefore happened before I ever saw my present wife and I did not hide it from her. In case therefore these twins should reach the age of twenty-one years and from reasons they cannot get their share of the fifth reserved for them, they are to have $4000 each out of my whole estate to enable them to prosecute some honest pursuit, profession or calling.

March 15th, 1833, I understand one of Mrs. Wills' twin sons died some weeks ago, there is therefore one only to provide for. (*With this happy natural simplification of so plural a difficulty, the testator then delicately adds*): My wife is to have all my furniture, books, bedding, linen, plate, wines, spirits, etc., etc., Glass and China ware.

JOHN ALLAN

Even the "wines, spirits, etc., etc.," however, do not seem to have had the desired cordial effect.

At a Circuit Superior Court of Law and Chancery held for Henrico County at the Capital in the City of Richmond, the 8th day of May 1834. . . . Louisa G. Allan, widow and relict of the said John Allan, deceased . . . appeared in Court and renounced the Executorship, and also declared that she will not take or accept the provision of any part thereof. . . .

The second Mrs. Allan survived her husband by almost half a century, during a considerable portion of that time, several gentlemen practicing before the Richmond bar were able to join in the refrain of an old English song:

God bless the testator who draws his own will

discreetly, but with substantial reasons for appreciation of the professional sentiment.

There can be little doubt that even the hope of a legacy in Richmond had kept the young poet in Baltimore restless. John Allan *could* be, and we know often was, prevailed upon to help from time to time, so that the feeling of there being a final refuge, someone to depend upon in time of desperate need, had never been entirely absent in his former ward. The rôle of the cast-off rich man's son, even of the prodigal who might be forgiven at the last, was also a pleasant and interesting background which Poe never entirely abandoned. He was delighted to refer to it from time to time in letters, and we have already seen how frequently it cropped up in his conversation. Mr. Allan's death had now put an end to this as far as the reality went. The last ties of self-interest and lingering sentiment with the past were now demonstrably dissolved. " Dear Pa " was now beyond the appeal of even the most needy " man of genius "; and the will, silent about Poe, had been probated. The doubtless disappointed young man in Baltimore could no longer deceive even himself about the past. In grim earnest he must now look to the future for the tying of any ties that might bind. Those of his youth were now only the figments of memory.

There was a certain side of Poe's nature which made him admire and lean upon those who were capable of overcoming the difficulties of a physical world. He was, in a large sense, incapable of doing so himself, like so many other artists who find the ultimate reality in dreams, yet he instinctively felt the need and the worth of practical capacity. It was for that reason that he had never been entirely able to shake himself clear of John Allan, even in his own mind. He was not entirely selfish in this, it was merely the necessity of self-protection, a means by which he tried

to vicariously complement an accidental lack in his own character. Yet strangely enough he was never willing to admit that dependence implied possession. It was always at that point that the break inevitably came, and a new pillar was sought to lean upon, or another breast upon which to rest " a proud but weary head." The situation, in various disguises, occurred again and again in the future, as it had in the past, for instance:

Once having freed himself from John Allan, starvation forced Poe to depend upon another guardian, the Army; finding that intolerable, he went through exactly the same motions with precisely the same persons at West Point; free of that, with John Allan beyond recall, he sheltered himself upon the wide and willing breast of his Aunt Maria Clemm. It seemed providential to both of them, and psychologically it was so. On the return from the visit to Richmond in the early Winter of 1834, Poe must have realized in his inmost being that the little house on Amity Street, and not the great mansion in Richmond, was " home."

Consequently, it was natural enough that it should occur to both Poe and Mrs. Clemm, if it had not been in their thoughts even earlier, that the arrangement, already in force at Amity Street, might be made permanent by a marriage with Virginia. She was still young, very young, only in her twelfth year in fact, but she was budding into womanhood, and marriage at that time, especially in the South, often took place very early. Many a girl was the mother of a family at sixteen. Edgar's affairs with other girls must have alarmed Mrs. Clemm. She could see herself left alone if Poe married, or making room for a young bride in her household, to the numbers of which, death only had brought relief. In addition she loved Poe, there can be no doubt of that. He was of her own blood, and she regarded herself now as his mother. It would be an excellent family arrangement, and some sort of an understanding was certainly arrived at by the young people. Henry Clemm had gone away, and his mother was anxious to have the protection and the support which Edgar's presence promised. Much has been made of this " romance." In sober reality it can scarcely be regarded as more than an acknowledgment of general convenience. Virginia was still too young for an imme-

diate ceremony and there was grave objection to an immediate marriage on the part of the Neilson Poes.

Poe, on his part, was troubled in his heart by the fact that Virginia was his full cousin, and by her extreme youth. He was troubled and yet attracted. The truth seems to be that he was a type which was so hypersensitive as to be somewhat revolted by the fully developed womanly form, and some of its more hearty implications. The infantile, and very youthful, bore a strange attraction for him that satisfied a craving for the abnormal manifest in other directions. Baudelaire describes it well. Poe was at once excited and repulsed. The relations with Virginia lie very close to the core of his inner mystery; they explain many of his heroines. It was not the charming and simple affair that those in love with convention would have us believe. About it was the haunted grey twilight of near incest that troubled his deepest dreams. He was twenty-five and she was about thirteen. The neurologist's eye is needed to probe deeper. One feels very near here to the secret of a strange soul. What were the real incidents of the wooing, no one will know. The kind Poe cousins were evidently alarmed, and are known to have remonstrated with Mrs. Clemm.[461] Thus matters remained for about a year.

During the latter part of 1834 despite the brighter prospects opened up by the *Saturday Visitor* prize and a certain amount of "fame" which went with it, Poe's condition was more than usually desperate. No word had come from Carey & Lea, in Philadelphia, about the volume of short stories, and there seems to have been no remunerative work of any kind. Mrs. Clemm's entire attention must have been taken up by ministering to the old grandmother who was fast approaching her end. Edgar himself was in ill health, approaching one of those periods of utter depression, due to nerve strain and a weak heart. The neurasthenic hero of the stories written during the Baltimore period shadow forth his own condition. *The Visitor* had published his poem, *The Coliseum,* earlier in the year. But even its columns

[461] Neilson Poe, who had a large place just outside of Baltimore, a little later offered to take Virginia and keep her as one of his family until she was eighteen. The objection was not to Virginia's marrying Poe, but on account of her extreme youth. The fact is significant. See Woodberry, 1904, vol. I, pages 137 and 144.

were now less hospitable, as his friend Wilmer had been forced out of the editorship into circumstances of great poverty and his place taken by Hewitt, who was a competitor of Poe and probably could not forget that Poe had approached him once asking him to allow the facts of the poetry award to become known. Finances for the little family on Amity Street were now at their lowest ebb, and in November, 1834, alarmed and dismayed by hearing no word from Philadelphia, Poe wrote the following letter to his friend Mr. Kennedy:

Baltimore *Nov.* 1834[462]

Dr. Sir, — I have a favor to beg of you which I thought it better to ask in writing, because, sincerely, I had not the courage to ask it in person. I am indeed well aware that I have no claim whatever to your attention, and that even the manner of my introduction to your notice was, at best equivocal. Since the day you first saw me my situation in life has altered materially. At that time I looked forward to the inheritance of a large fortune, and in the meantime was in receipt of an annuity sufficient for my support. This was allowed to me by a gentleman of Virginia (Mr. Jno. Allan) who adopted me at the age of two years (both my parents being dead) and who, until lately always treated me with the affection of a father.[463] But a second marriage on his part, and I dare say many follies on my own at length ended in a quarrel between us. He is now dead and has left me nothing. I am thrown entirely upon my own resources with no profession, and very few friends. Worse than all this, I am at length penniless. Indeed no circumstances less urgent would have induced me to risk your friendship by troubling you with my distresses. But I could not help thinking that if my situation was stated — as you could state it — to Carey and Lea, they might be led to aid me with a small sum in consideration of my Ms. now in their hands. This would relieve my immediate wants, and I could then look forward more confidently to better days. At all events receive the assurance of my gratitude for what you have already done.

Most respy, yr, obt. st.,
Edgar Allan Poe

Mr. Kennedy was just stepping into a carriage to go to Annapolis when he received Poe's note. He remained there for some

[462] A letter in the *Kennedy Manuscripts.*

[463] This is all "poetic license" on Poe's part, of course.

time and did not reply to Poe until December 22, 1834, in part as follows:

> . . . I requested Carey immediately upon the receipt of your first letter to do something for you as speedily as he might find an opportunity, and to make some advance on your book. His answer let me know that he would go on to publish, but the expectation of any profit from the undertaking he considered doubtful — not from want of merit in the production, but because small books of detached tales, however well written, seldom yield a sum sufficient to enable the bookseller to purchase a copyright. He recommends, however, that I should allow him to sell some of the tales to the publishers of the annuals. My reply was that I thought you would not object to this if the right to publish the same tale was reserved for the volume. He has accordingly sold one of the tales to Miss Leslie for the *Souvenir,* at a dollar a page, I think with the reservation above mentioned — and has remitted me a draft of fifteen dollars which I will hand over to you as soon as you call upon me, which I hope you will do as soon as you can make it convenient. If the other tales can be sold in the same way, you will get more for the work than by an exclusive publication.
>
> Yours truly, JOHN P. KENNEDY

This little snatch of correspondence lowers us like a diving bell into the depths, where for a little space we can look around us in the darkness of a young poet's despair. Both letters are characteristic of their writers. Poe's one of restrained desperation, with the characteristically garbled autobiographical statements, altered to suit the occasion; Mr. Kennedy's kindly, wise, and supremely tactful — "My reply was I thought you would not object to this" — and the "draft of fifteen dollars which I will hand over to you as soon as you call upon me which I hope you will do as soon as you can make it convenient" — how *soon,* and how *convenient* it was, we may be sure that Mr. Kennedy knew only too well.

Nor did the kind offices of the older man end here. The $15 must have been eked out to the last penny, but in the middle of March, 1835, Poe again wrote Mr. Kennedy asking his influence with the Public School Commissioners to enable him to obtain a position as a school teacher, ". . . Have I any hope? . . . the 18th is fixed for the decision of the commissioners, and the advertisement has only this moment caught my eye." Mr. Kennedy's

reply written the same day, Sunday, March 15, 1835[464] was the famous invitation to dinner. In reply to this Poe dispatched the following pathetic note, perhaps the wide-eyed little Virginia carried it, as she had carried notes of a different kind before:

DR. SIR, — Your kind invitation to dinner today has wounded me to the quick. I cannot come — and for reasons of the most humiliating nature in my personal appearance. You may conceive my deep mortification in making this disclosure to you — but it was necessary. If you will be my friend so far as to loan me $20, I will call on you tomorrow — otherwise it will be impossible, and I must submit to my fate.

Sincerely yours,
E. A. POE

Sunday 15th.

The little note was the turning point in Poe's literary career. Poe must, indeed, have been desperate before his pride, his governing motive, could have surrendered so far. Mr. Kennedy was touched to the quick. He now fully realized the situation that the letter revealed. The curtains in the windows of a proud little home had been drawn back for an instant and revealed the illy clad family who dwelt there sitting about an empty table. The good man bestirred himself, as he would doubtless have done before had he known. Poe was provided with clothes, invited to the Kennedy house, made much of at the generous board, — doubtless Mrs. Clemm's basket profited, too — and Edgar was even loaned Mr. Kennedy's horse " for exercise." The last was indeed the refinement of courtesy to a Virginian. Once on horseback, Edgar Poe felt himself to be a gentleman again. Nor will the sneers of Griswold a quarter of a century later, at all these items, suffice to convince the world that it was merely a beggar who went riding.

But the greatest service of all was Mr. Kennedy's introduction of the young author to the editor of the *Southern Literary Messenger* in Richmond, to whom, upon the advice and recommendation of his patron, Poe submitted some of his tales. *Berenice* was accepted, and appeared in the March, 1835, number of the *Messenger* with a highly laudatory editorial notice. The editor was

464 This note has been correctly dated as of 1835 by Prof. Woodberry, and not 1833 as given by Prof. Harrison.

much impressed and followed up Poe's reference to Mr. Kennedy with a letter of inquiry. Mr. Kennedy replied to Mr. White:

Baltimore, *Apr.* 13, 1835

DEAR SIR, — Poe did right in referring to me. He is very clever with his pen — classical and scholar-like. He wants experience and direction, but I have no doubt he can be made very useful to you. And, poor fellow, he is *very* poor. I told him to write something for every number of your magazine, and that you might find it to your advantage to give him some permanent employ. . . . The young fellow is highly imaginative and a little *terrific*. He is at work upon a tragedy, but I have turned him to drudging upon whatever may make money. . . .

The hint from Mr. Kennedy went home. *Berenice* was the entering wedge, and every number of the *Messenger* for sometime afterward contained a story and some criticism or reviews by Poe. John P. Kennedy had not only saved him; he had "made" him. Poe never forgot this as long as he lived and, many years later, remarked to Thomas Stoddard with an undimmed sense of gratitude, "Mr. Kennedy has been, at all times, a true friend to me — he was the first true friend I ever had — I am indebted to him for *life itself*."

Thomas Wylkes White, editor of the *Southern Literary Messenger,* was a native of Virginia,[465] and a member of the numerous tribe of itinerant printer-publishers who, in the 1830's, were filling the ephemeral editorial chairs of various will-o'-the-wisp magazines that glowed faintly here and there all over the United States, and for the most part died away painlessly, after giving off a faint gaseous light. Mr. White was more able than most, however, and a happy combination of circumstances and personalities permitted him to continue the *Southern Literary Messenger* with unusual success. In 1834, he went to Richmond — where nine numbers of the *Messenger* had already appeared under the editorship of Mr. James Heath, author of *Edge Hill.*[466] There White became a sort of combined printer-business-manager-and-editor of the sheet, Mr. Heath continuing for some time

[465] The statement that Mr. White was a Northerner, born in Yorktown, Pennsylvania, etc., etc., is incorrect.

[466] *Edge Hill,* a novel then rather widely read, by James Heath.

to act in an unpaid advisory capacity. White was a good business man, with a pleasant personality, although shrewd, but he lacked the background, the literary qualities, and the editorial vision to make the magazine a complete success. In 1834, there were only a few hundred subscribers. In Poe, Mr. White soon recognized the very type of man which his paper most needed, and the correspondence, stories, reviews and articles, which Poe contributed through the Spring of 1835, led up to a suggestion of permanent employment on the staff. On June 2, 1835, Poe wrote White a long letter on various topics concerning the magazine, in which he says:

> . . . You ask me if I would be willing to come to Richmond if you should have occasion for my services during the coming winter. I reply that nothing would give me greater pleasure. I have been desirous for some time past of paying a visit to Richmond, and would be glad of any reasonable excuse of so doing. . . .

Aside from the fact that Richmond was always home to Poe, there was a particular, and peculiar personal reason, over and above the opportunity offered by White, why he "would be glad of any reasonable excuse of paying a visit to Richmond." The reason belonged to the realm of the romantic.[467]

Miss Mary Winfree of Chesterfield, Virginia, a young lady who had formerly enjoyed Poe's passing attentions, and who had never forgotten him, had come to visit in Baltimore some time before Poe's marriage with Virginia. She was, perhaps, the first of the several Marys to whom Poe had confided the touching fact that she bore his favorite name. At any rate, her interest was sufficient to cause her to seek him out. She did not, of course, know that Poe was thinking of marrying Virginia, and it is not likely that he enlightened her. Miss Winfree was a close friend of Elmira Royster (Mrs. Shelton), and, in discussing the past with Poe, the interesting and disturbing information came to light that Elmira was not altogether happy with her husband, and that she had never ceased to love Poe. The deception which her parents had

[467] I am indebted to a Richmond acquaintance who desires to remain anonymous for part of the information dealing with this little known episode. This acquaintance has the copy of the *Bijou.*

practiced upon her had, as we have seen, come to light through the finding of one of Poe's letters to her from the University, and her first romantic attachment flamed up anew. Miss Winfree brought with her a little book called the *Bijou,* one of the ubiquitous parlor annuals of the time, to whose pages Mrs. Shelton had contributed a story signed with her initials, in which, to those who knew her past, the meaning was clear. She was, it appears, languishing for a glimpse of her true love, and the pain could not be assuaged. Despite the fact that " Hymen (*in a double sense*) and Time and Destiny were now stalking between " him and her — Poe seems to have determined to see her at least once again, to let her know that he still loved her, and to justify the past. How far he intended to go, it is impossible to say. Circumstances would doubtless dictate that, as they did. It was a sentimental and dangerous situation that appealed to his romantic heart. Once in Richmond, time would provide the opportunity. What was Virginia's status in the triangle it is hard to say.

For a time, however, the move to Richmond had to be deferred. Mr. White was not yet ready, and old Mrs. Poe was dying. A few checks now and then for $5 and $10 amounts from the *Messenger* served to back the wolf off the front stoop, at least, while the pen in the little room on Amity Street went forward. . . . The mail was robbed by one William Jones and Poe found himself the loser " to a small amount." Poe purchased some especially fine printer's ink for Mr. White and took it to the steamboat himself. John Marshall, the great Chief Justice, died. Poe remembered him well from the old family pew in the Monumental Church. He, too, was now added to the names of the past recorded in Shockoe Cemetery, and a little paragraph from the hand of the boy who had known him appeared in the *Messenger* soon after:

> . . . Our great and lamented countryman, fellow-townsman, neighbor and friend — for by all these names did a fortuitous conjunction of circumstances, including his own kind and prideless heart, entitle us to call him. . . .[468]

[468] Chief Justice Marshall had been injured in a stage coach accident in the Spring of 1835. He went to Philadelphia for medical treatment where he died on July 6. Poe was at work on a review of the second edition of Marshall's *Life of*

On May 30, 1835, Poe wrote to Mr. White in Richmond alluding to a serious breakdown about that time:

> I have not seen Mr. Kennedy for some days, having been too unwell to go abroad . . . at the time I wrote the hasty sketch I sent you I was so ill as to be hardly able to see the paper on which I wrote, and finished in a state of complete exhaustion. . . .

On January 12, he again writes White:

> I am glad to say that I have entirely recovered — although Dr. Buckler, no longer than three weeks ago, assured me that nothing but a sea-voyage would save me. . . .

Evidently this was no ordinary indisposition. Dr. Buckler would not have ordered a sea-voyage to a poverty-stricken young poet unless he had good cause for alarm. He thought it was the only thing that would *save* his patient. And this illness was only a repetition of several that had preceded it in the previous four years. Poe had specifically mentioned his ill health in letters to John Allan as we have seen.

An understanding and some explanation of Poe's physical and mental condition is, from now on, fundamental even to a partial understanding of his character. A completely satisfactory understanding of a matter, necessarily nebulous and of a character so strangely contradictory and complex, must perhaps forever elude our grasp. There are, however, certain indications inherent in the symptoms of his condition, and the work which he produced, that tend to throw a light upon some of the darker phases of his nature. Any study of the man, which obstinately refuses to recognize the unpleasant and unfortunate aspects of his nature, or to explain his tragedy by assuming and asserting that his misfortunes were due merely to persecution, an unappreciative world, and a preverse fate, must disregard, ignorantly or deliberately, some of the outstanding and most incontestable facts of his career. Poe's human misfortunes cannot be laid in the main upon the shoulders of the epoch and the world in which he moved; they were, for the most part, caused by the early break-up of his physical health,

Washington, in two volumes, 1832. Marshall's death had an important bearing on the trend of national events, see note 500, Chapter XVIII, page 412.

due to his unhappy youth and heredity and the stimulants which he used to counteract their effects. Paradoxically enough, out of the mental state evolved from ill health and one of the stimulants he resorted to, flowed much of the creative work of the artist which insured his literary success. That there was, in addition to this, a third factor, the unique humanity of the man himself, goes without saying. Every human being is different from all others. The exact and unique flavor of a personality can never be completely caught in any literary reconstruction. The hint of the peculiar genius of a man, can only be partly reflected in the glass of his actions. These are being detailed here, and, from them, the reader must largely be left to make his own reconstruction. The more physical aspects, however, bear analysis, and it is necessary now to attempt some evaluation of them in the interplay of ill health and the effects of nostrums. Combining the last two with the reflection of the man's self in his actions, at least, a credible ghost may be invoked.

Poe was afflicted with a weak heart. There is, later on, direct medical evidence of a doctor and a professional nurse of long experience to that effect. In addition to this, the long tragedy of his youth had, as we have seen, exhausted him nervously. The affect of these two conditions was to subject him to a general feeling of depression due to subnormal vitality, culminating frequently in periods of more or less complete prostration or threatened collapse. A specious, and apparently easy "remedy" for this feeling of debility, induced by a weak heart and exhausted nerves, was the use of stimulants or sedatives. It seems transparently evident that, when a period of collapse overtook him, Poe resorted to one of two drugs, either alcohol or opium. There is direct evidence, as we have seen, of his use of alcohol in 1826 at Charlottesville and in 1830 at West Point. Even a very little was, to him, peculiarly disastrous. With the advent of the Baltimore period, there are powerful reasons to lead one to believe that, from that date on, Poe now resorted, *from time to time,* to the use of opiates.

In the first place, it must be remembered that in his condition, if he were to continue to work, perhaps at times even to survive,

drugs were in order. He had tried alcohol and found it more or less disastrous. Opium, for Poe, involved a peculiarly seductive temptation. It removed him completely from the world of reality which he largely disliked; it enormously increased the bounds of his imagination; and it coincidentally vastly stimulated his creative faculty while soothing his nerves. At the same time its effects were so subtle as to escape immediate observation and comment, while, at least at first, it did not produce the violent reactions and periods of mania which followed his resort to drink. For the time being, it seemed to solve all difficulties and to provide a sovereign panacea.

During the stay in Baltimore from 1831 to 1834, there can be no moral doubt that Poe was using opium, at least from time to time. The indubitable evidence of the fact, lies in the work which he produced. *The Tales of the Folio Club* are replete with opiate dreams, and when they fell into the hands of Baudelaire, some years later, caused him to shed tears of joy as he recognized the very features of his own reveries as it were endowed with life. Such stories as *Ligeia* and *Berenice* illustrate this directly, especially the latter. They provide not only direct references to the drug, but the imagery, the irrational associations, and the very use of words is characteristic. To those who have no knowledge or familiarity with the effects of opium, and they are, of course, the majority, the evidence may seem insufficient; to those who have, the turning of these pages tells an irrefutable tale. There is evidence by witnesses that Poe took opium in Philadelphia. In 1847, he tried to commit suicide with laudanum. The inference is that he had tried the use of opiates before. Rosalie Poe, his sister, says that in 1848, at Fordham, he " begged for morphine." In June, 1884, Dr. John Carter of Baltimore who had considerable knowledge of Poe from his brother, another physician who had treated the poet in Richmond in 1849, wrote to Professor Woodberry that, while he had no direct personal evidence, " I may state, in a matter of so leading importance, that I incline to the view that Poe began the use of drugs in Baltimore, that his periods of abstinence from liquor were periods of at least moderate indulgence in opium, . . ." etc.

During the Baltimore period, Poe is known to have abstained almost totally from liquor. Although he was ill and in the greatest poverty, as his own letters at that time abundantly attest, he nevertheless contrived to produce a large mass of creative work. That when so ill, and under such difficult living conditions, he could produce at an hitherto unexampled rate, indicates an unusual cause. But when the work itself produced under such conditions is examined and found to contain, not only direct references to the use of opium, but to be of a type produced by a consciousness laboring under the effects of the drug, the chain seems complete. Besides this, there were also secondary manifestations of a decided change in his character through the Baltimore years which tend to confirm the suspicion.

In the first place, from 1831 to 1834, Poe remained almost unknown. The records of his existence for part of that time are amazingly obscure, and, for a considerable portion of the period, obsolutely lapse. This means, if anything, that he was largely confined to the garret of Mrs. Clemm. Ill health, poverty, and pen-driving will not entirely explain the fact that a young soldier and a fairly athletic young man of a few years before had suddenly become a complete recluse. He was not ill all the time, but at periods, yet he obtained no steady employment for a period of almost five years in the prime of youth. Thousands of the young men in Baltimore at the same time, despite the severe financial stricture, were successfully employed. What was Poe doing? Dreaming in Mrs. Clemm's attic, and the records of those dreams are strongly tinged with opium. Alcohol he did not take because he did not need it. Mrs. Clemm's influence is of course to be reckoned with here.

Another startling change also overtook him now. From 1832 to 1847, Mary Devereaux is the only record of a really normally passionate love affair that Poe was engaged in. Up until that time, all through his youth, his interest in girls and women had been varied and constant. These now suddenly cease. Now, one of the notorious effects of opium, is the eventual weakening of sexual desire. This condition now suddenly seems to present itself. At the end of the period in 1835, he had deviated so far from the nor-

mal as to be able to marry, apparently both willingly and apathetically, a thirteen-year-old child. That there were other and more profound sexual disturbances in Poe's nature, the Sadistic trend of a considerable body of his work indicates. The lessening of desire, and the strange conditions of his marriage, are the principal matters, however, to be reckoned with. During the latter half of his life, his trend from the normal was marked. What had produced such an effect upon one who, in boyhood, appears to have been somewhat precocious, may well cause one to ponder. In the understanding of Poe's character during the latter half of his life, the problem is a central one. He was now entering upon a new phase.

For the Baltimore period and the home on Amity Street was about to close. One cannot help but wonder about the life that went on in the little house with the single dormer window and the end chimney. Mrs. Clemm was preoccupied night and day with the duties of the household and the dying grandmother, she and Edgar gathered about the little dining-room table with the always snowy cloth and the spotless china, listening to the childish talk of the childish cousin, whose great eyes looked at Edgar only half comprehendingly. — What did Poe think of it all? — the ambitious young man with the soaring mind. And what of the more intimate and tender episodes? There was something strange about that, something infantile with the quality of a day-dream come true. Strange and yet alluring. An inscrutable experience was having its subtle way. "Ligeia" had become a reality. She was beginning to dominate his dreams, and yet was she? There was still Elmira.

On July 7, 1835, Mrs. David Poe died at Amity Street. She was seventy-eight years old. Her death could, in the nature of things, have been nothing but a relief. Mrs. Clemm could now turn all her attention to Edgar and Virginia. The household was reduced to the final number to which there was never any natural addition — and Poe was free to follow his star.

Under the beat of the steamer's paddles, Baltimore faded for the time being into a dream. Richmond was calling with all the force of the past and a brighter future. The dream of Poe's life

was coming true — he was going "home" with foreign laurels. They were not bright yet, but they were visible, and they became him well. Mrs. Clemm remained behind in the house on Amity Street, awaiting the outcome of a long litigation over her husband's will,[469] and to watch over Virginia. It was about midsummer of the year 1835. Only fourteen years later the curtain fell.

[469] This "litigation" if it can be termed that, had to do with Mrs. Clemm's and her children's share in the property of Mrs. Catherine Clemm of Mount Prospect, Maryland. She was, it seems, entitled to one-third — the children of the first wife of William Clemm made trouble. Poe was exceedingly anxious to obtain this legacy, a small amount, to help set up his own house with Mrs. Clemm. See Poe to Kennedy, Richmond, January 22, 1836, etc. The matter later called Poe to Baltimore from Philadelphia.

CHAPTER XVII
The Valley of the Many-Colored Grass

ABOUT the person of the young man, who reappeared in Richmond in the early August days of 1835, there was, beyond peradventure, something distinguished: a certain knack of tying the black stock; a precise and studied nonchalance about the buttoning of the tight, double-breasted waistcoat over the impeccable linen — carefully mended by "Muddie" — that was somehow arresting. The large beaver hat, then universally worn by all who pretended to the name of gentleman, sat a little to the side, tilted a bit backward, accentuating an already prominent brow, and curling in an arch way over a delicate ear. Under the flare of its small brim, drooped a tangle of black-brown hair blanching an olive, oval face from which looked, unforgettably, two large and haunted grey-blue eyes. The mouth was small, a little weak, and slightly twisted by pain. The lips and chin were clean shaven, and there was the faintest suggestion about them of a whimsical and ironical smile out of a wisp of side-burns. It was the countenance of one who regarded his world as a dream within a dream.

The erect figure of the man dressed in a raven-black and meticulously brushed flare-tail coat, with the roll collar left open, contrived to be impressive by just avoiding being dapper. The shoulders were thrown back, showing too narrow a chest, and vest buttons that gleamed like medals over the stomach. The metal tassel of a long, knit, ring-fastened purse dangled from the slant vest pocket, anchored there by nothing more than a Mexican half dollar of a few "levys," and a nervous brisk gait was accentuated by the ripple in an ample pair of Nankeen, diapered pantaloons, strapped under the boots. Such was Mr. White's brilliant young editor, going calling in Richmond some weeks after the last purple blooms had disappeared from the paulownia trees.

Those who passed him in the street felt they had encountered a presence, and both men and women remarked and remembered, " There goes Edgar Poe."

For the first few days he probably stopped at Duncan Lodge with the Mackenzies. Rosalie was there, happy, unshadowed by any future, a fully grown child. Mr. and Mrs. Mackenzie never failed to make him welcome, and there was always Jack — bluff and hearty. Perhaps " Aunt Nancy " dropped over quietly from the Allan house to tell him about Pa's last hours, and whisper about the will. She, at least, was secure in $300 a year and her board and washing. Her revelations could not have been much of a surprise to Poe, who would certainly ascertain for himself the exact provisions of a certain document.[470] But it must have been strange to pass the big house with its drawn curtains; to hear the shouts of John Allan's eldest boy in the old garden; to be stopped in the streets by the affectionate greeting of the old house-servants, and yet to know, beyond doubt, that in all that he was never, nevermore, to have any part. How curious, too, when passing the store at *Ellis & Allan* to look in at the door! The very shadows and odors were familiar[471] — John Allan's desk was there in the office, and a trunk with letters — but " Pa " was inevitably gone.

The past was not forgotten, however. The strange record of it lay there in the old trunk, and in the hearts of those who now occupied the big house. Poe's arrival, although she took no notice of it, was undoubtedly a source of anxiety to Mrs. Allan. Already she was in trouble about the will. Poe knew too much, if he had cared to say anything. It would pay to be careful, above all to avoid any more scenes. So the big door never swung open to him again, and other doors in certain other places were quietly and

[470] Poe would almost certainly acquaint himself with the nature of John Allan's will probated in public court. He would take no chances.

[471] After the death of the first Mrs. Allan, John Allan removed a trunk containing his first wife's correspondence and probably other data to *Ellis & Allan.* In this he put Poe's letters from 1824 on. The trunk fell into the hands of James Galt as John Allan's executor and was by him removed to Fluvanna Plantation. There the second Mrs. Allan had access to it and removed from it some of Poe's letters now in the *Valentine Museum Collection.* She appears to have destroyed others. Only one letter in Frances Allan's handwriting is known to exist. James Galt said there were " other letters " that remained in the trunk. Whose, it is not known.

mysteriously closed. *Sub rosa,* in certain circles the word went around. In the end it made a difference, especially when the Allan children grew up. At that time they were only cutting their teeth.[472]

For the most part, though, the old friends remained true, Jack Mackenzie, of course, and Bob Cabell, Rob Stanard especially, and the Galts. Poe was welcome at many homes, for himself alone. Many knew enough to take the talk of ingratitude to John Allan with the proper grain of salt; card playing at the University had been heard of before. It was not a sin which debarred one from dances. Even old I. O. U.'s could be overlooked when a charming young man in the way of fame was to be forgiven, and invited in to add to the conversation. On the whole it was at first rather a triumphant return. There were a few discreet smiles, no doubt, at the expense of a certain proud lady, *not* a Virginian, who kept a large house. But Frances Valentine's foster-son was not overlooked. After Baltimore and poverty it seemed brilliant. There was wine at every table, music, pretty girls, and a certain deference to "literature." On some occasions all this seems to have gone to the head.

After a short stay at the Mackenzies', Poe took up lodgings with Mrs. Poore, who kept one of those peculiarly genteel Southern boarding houses on Bank Street, Capitol Square. The weather was fine, Mr. White was more than cordial, and Eliza, his daughter, could recite Shakespeare "elegantly." She had "remarkable eyes." Elmira was near and not forgotten. A little after the arrival of the young poet in Richmond, the *Southern Literary Messenger* found its columns embellished with the following lines contributed by "Sylvio."

TO SARAH

. . . The silvery streamlet gurgling on,
The mock-bird chirping in the thorn,
Remind me, love, of thee.
They seem to whisper thoughts of love,
As thou didst when the stars above
Witnessed thy vows to me; —

472 John Allan's last child, a posthumous daughter, survived her two brothers, who died young men.

The gentle zephyr floating by,
In chorus to my pensive sigh,
Recalls the hours of bliss,
When from thy ruby lips I drew
Fragrance as sweet as Hermia's dew,
And left the first fond kiss. . . .

As Mrs. A. Barrett Shelton suddenly ran across these yearning rhymes in the *Messenger,* her eyes may possibly have become too dimmed to note the exact expression on the face of her husband comfortably seated at his breakfast coffee. Many must have known who the poet on the *Messenger* was, " Sylvio " could not have been an impenetrable disguise. If so, the enlightening Miss Winfree was Elmira's bosom friend. In the meantime Edgar went every morning to his desk at the *Messenger* office, sometimes, too often perhaps, taking a bracer from the decanter on Mrs. Poore's sideboard, which made him superbly confident — a superbness that did not altogether recommend itself to Mr. White.[473] Otherwise they got along famously.

The offices of the *Southern Literary Messenger* were situated at the corner of Main and Fifteenth Streets, in a substantial three-story brick building with a steeply-pitched slate roof topped by a squat brick chimney. Underneath was Archer's shoe shop, the *Messenger* being on the second floor. Poe reached his sanctum by an outside stairway from Fifteenth Street and held forth in the rear room. It was a neighborhood with which he was uncannily familiar, for right next door (one could hear the clerks shouting through the walls) were the store and lofts of *Ellis & Allan.* Poe had gone to work that way before! The very slight rise in the brick pavement starting up Fifteenth from Main was familiar. Even now the click of a cane upon it, and the ring of a boot must have made him start.

In the same office with Poe, sat Mr. White,[474] a stocky, good-

[473] Mr. White, it will be remembered, specifically warned Poe against morning drinking. See White to Poe, Richmond, September 29, 1835, printed on page 385.

[474] The author is in possession of abundant material for a literal description of the *Southern Literary Messenger* offices, the vicinity and the personnel. The building was removed in 1908, much of the material in it being taken over for the Poe Shrine. The description of T. W. White is from a portrait.



The *Southern Literary Messenger* Building

and the offices of *Ellis & Allan* to the right

Two buildings in Richmond, Virginia, intimately connected with Poe. Many months were passed under both roofs as a clerk in his foster-father's warehouse, and as an editor on the *Messenger*



"Sunday Evening at the Yarringtons"

From an old illustration

natured man with a florid face. Visitors, local literary lights and authors, dropped in frequently for a chat or to solicit a favor. In front could be heard the Scotch-tinged conversation of the foreman, William McFarland, and John Fergusson as they clapped the frames on the round, black-faced presses or fluttered their hands magically over the square cases of type. Proofs hung upon rusty hooks; the mail was heavy, and piled up mainly upon Poe's desk. Copies of books for review kept coming in, so the young editor was very busy.

The office was left very much alone to Poe, as Mr. White, once the literary capacity of his assistant became apparent, went about the state and the neighboring towns soliciting subscriptions. There were only 700 subscribers when Poe came. With the combined efforts of the young man's brilliant pen and Mr. White's junketings, they now mounted with a bound. So there was no time left to dream. In the little office, where the light filtered blankly through the square, dusty panes, someone was always holding forth and squirting tobacco about. There were volumes to review; McFarland was howling for copy; or the latest edition was to be bundled up, addressed by hand, and sent out. Whale-oil lamps and printer's ink scented the air. Only on the way home in the evening, as the strong sugary smell of Virginia tobacco surged out at him from the door of *Ellis & Allan,* the past, all the lost past, rolled down upon Poe overpoweringly in a cloud of sweet odor, for he was peculiarly sensitive to perfume. To his dying day the scent of orris root made Frances Allan live again, standing as she used to in her bedroom, looking into her glass before an open bureau drawer.[475] Then he went "home" to dine at Mrs. Poore's in Capitol Square.

Behind it all there was, already, a vast melancholy. If "Muddie" and "Sis" could only come to Richmond! Perhaps a little later? Just now his "salary" was only $10 a week.

One day Poe received an invitation to attend a party at a big house "across the river." He went early.[476] Elmira, he heard, was

[475] Poe spoke of this memory-odor as late as 1849.

[476] Mrs. Shelton herself authenticated this incident.

going to be there. The stairs, in this mansion of a memorable meeting, curved in a double arc to a landing with a bay window from which opened a spacious drawing-room. At the end of this, in a window niche, Poe took his stand and waited. The gentlemen left their hats in the hall; the ladies left their wraps in an anteroom off the stairs. Presently Elmira appeared. She was coming up the stairway alone and still beautiful. The September sunshine caught, with a well-known glint, in her auburn hair. Poe watched it while she took off her hat. Then she turned to enter the room, but she did not do so. Something stopped her at the threshold more powerful than a restraining hand. It was an unforgettable and devouring pair of eyes.

Mrs. Shelton said, years later, that it seemed to her as if there were nothing else in the room.[476] It seemed as if they shed darkness in the place, the shadows of longing and reproach. For a moment they stood and exchanged glances, then her husband came. He took in the situation at a glance; almost carried his wife away; put on her cloak himself as he led her to the door, and drove off furiously down the road.

Poe had, indeed, lost his "Lenore." He did not see her again for more than ten years. Both the Sheltons and Roysters were much alarmed. Elmira was, after this, both recalcitrant and ill, and her husband intimated that if Poe tried to meet her again, there would be a violent reckoning. Nor was this an idle threat, for, along the James and farther South,[477] the *code duello* was at that date, and for years to come, by no means a dead letter, as many another editor had good cause to know.

Poe was greatly depressed and, about that time, news came from Baltimore that threw him into despair. The Neilson Poes, it appears, had taken advantage of his absence to break off the affair with Virginia and were bringing pressure upon Mrs. Clemm to let the young girl come and live with them. It seemed as if once more his hopes of a home were to be dashed to the ground—or at least intolerably deferred. There was something peculiarly

[477] Duelling lingered in Virginia and the Carolinas long after it went out of fashion in the North. A notorious case occurred in Charleston, South Carolina, just before the Civil War, in which an editor was killed.

repulsive to Poe about a boarding house table. The purely accidental association of insufferable personalities who sought to gorge their appetites and curiosity about the same board, the landlady introducing "our poet," the suspicion which followed one who desired privacy, the five-year-old conversation, and the ignorant gossip, were enough to drive him mad. How could the gods afflict him with great dreams and the love of "all the beauty that we worship in a star," while seating him at a board where any remark above an inanity made all the heavy feasters choke or stare? It was a divine jest! Worse than the army mess, for there was no escape whatever. So Poe kept longing for the refuge of a home. As early as August 20 he remembered that he had well-to-do cousins in Georgia, and wrote to William Poe of Augusta giving a detailed account of the family and his life history, and soliciting aid for Mrs. Clemm:

. . . In conclusion I beg leave to assure you that whatever aid you may have it in your power to bestow upon Mrs. Clemm will be given to one who well deserves every kindness and attention. Would to God that I could at this moment aid her. She is now, while I write, struggling without friends, without money, and without health to support herself and two children. I sincerely pray God that the words which I am writing may be the means of inducing you to unite with your brothers and friends, and send her that *immediate* relief which it is *utterly* out of my power to give her just now, and which, unless it reach her soon will, I am afraid, reach her too late. Entreating your attention to this subject, I remain

Yours very truly & affectionately
EDGAR A. POE

The taking over of a new position or a decided change in one's mode of life and residence is, like New Year's, very often the occasion for trying to put good resolutions into effect. Upon assuming the new position in Richmond, Poe evidently undertook to shake off his dependence on stimulants of any kind, while, at the same time, he forced himself at the new work. The combined effect was more than he could support; he had evidently tried to bolster himself up by drinking, and the result was a collapse. The letter which he now wrote to Mr. Kennedy is the expression of one who finds the terrible drabness of the real world

intolerable as he struggles to abandon a habit. What the real reason is, Poe carefully conceals:

Richmond, *Sept.* 11, 1835

Dr. Sir, — I received a letter yesterday from Dr. Miller [478] in which he tells me you are in town (*Baltimore*). I hasten therefore, to write you, — and express by letter what I have always found impossible to express orally — my deep sense of gratitude for your frequent and effectual assistance and kindness. Through your influence Mr. White has been induced to employ me in assisting him with the Editorial duties of his Magazine — at a salary of $520 per annum. The situation is agreeable to me for many reasons — but alas! it appears to me that nothing can now give me pleasure — or the slightest gratification. Excuse me, my Dear Sir, if in this letter you find much incoherency. My feelings at this moment are pitiable indeed. I am suffering under a depression of spirits such as I have never felt before. I have struggled in vain against the influence of this melancholy — *you will believe me* when I say that I am still miserable in spite of the great improvement in my circumstances. I say you will believe me, and for this simple reason, that a man who is writing for effect does not write thus. My heart is open before you — if it be worth reading, read it. I am wretched, and know not why. Console me — for you can. But let it be quickly — or it will be too late. Write me immediately. Convince me that it is worth one's while, that it is necessary to live, and you will prove yourself my friend. Persuade me to do what is right. I do not mean this — I do not mean that you should consider what I now write you a jest — oh pity me! for I feel that my words are incoherent — but I will recover myself. You will not fail to see that I am suffering under a depression of spirits which will ruin me should it be long continued. Write me then, and quickly. Urge me to do what is right. Your words will have more weight with me than the words of others — for you were my friend when no one else was. Fail not — as you value your peace of mind hereafter.

E. A. Poe

This terrible letter was evidently written in the access of remorse which followed an application to the bottle, and in a state of physical and mental collapse. Poe was, for the first time, completely in a vicious circle. Trying to escape from his troubles he had delivered himself to another torment. The angel of oblivion, which he sought to invoke, now first revealed itself as a demon

[478] *Kennedy Manuscripts.*

from which he could not escape. The thought was maddening. Had all the slavery in time of starvation, the escape from John Allan, the dreams of ambition been in vain? Elmira was gone. Virginia, it appeared, and with her the strength of Mrs. Clemm upon which he leaned, were about to be snatched from him, too. At Mrs. Poore's for the first time, Poe heard unmistakably the faint tapping at the window pane of the inexorable beak of the bird of despair that later invaded his chamber to perch triumphant over the personification of knowledge and art. It was the hand of a drowning man who had gone down for the first time, and felt the water close over him, that Mr. Kennedy was asked to take. There was a postscript almost as long as the letter in which Poe discusses the fate of his tales with Carey & Lea and rails against a fellow author for stealing (*sic*) some of his ideas from *Hans Pfaall.* It seems almost at if the man had developed two minds, a personal and an editorial self. The manifestations of the dual nature and the occasional visits of the demon were to continue. A few days later Mr. Kennedy replied:

Baltimore, *Sept.* 19, 1835

My Dear Poe, — I am sorry to see you in such a plight as your letter shows you in. — It is strange that just at the time when everybody is praising you and when Fortune has begun to smile upon your hitherto wretched circumstances you should be invaded by these villainous blue devils. — It belongs, however, to your age and temper to be thus buffeted, — but be assured it only wants a little resolution to master the adversary forever, — Rise early, live generously, and make cheerful acquaintances and I have no doubt you will send these misgivings to the Devil. — You will doubtless do well henceforth in literature and add to your *comforts* as well as to your reputation which, it gives me great pleasure to tell you, is everywhere rising in popular esteem. Can't you write some farces after the manner of the French Vaudevilles? If you can — (and I think you can —) you may turn them to excellent account by selling them to the managers in New York. I wish you would give your thoughts to this suggestion. . . .

An excellent suggestion, too — a few light farces to take his mind out of the strange ghoul-haunted hinterland where it too often wandered, and the first hint of New York. Mr. Kennedy understood suggestion better than he knew. But the "adver-

sary " was not such a simple one as he imagined. It was much " stranger " than he knew and had delivered a knockout in the first round. It is doubtful if Poe received Mr. Kennedy's letter in Richmond. He had parted with Mr. White and had gone back to Baltimore. Matters there had evidently come to a crisis with the Poes, Mrs. Clemm and Virginia, and on September 22, 1835,[479] he was secretly married in St. Paul's Episcopal Church to his little cousin. Mrs. Clemm was the only witness present and the minister, possibly at the solicitation of Poe himself, who was anxious to keep the matter from coming to the ears of his cousin Neilson, did not even make an entry in the parish register. Only the record of the city license and Mrs. Clemm's word remain. There can be little doubt, however, that the clandestine marriage took place.

Poe arrived in Baltimore somewhere about the twentieth in a highly agitated state. He had been dismissed by Mr. White and he thought he was going to lose Virginia. The house at Amity Street no doubt echoed with his pleadings and explanations. Once the clandestine marriage was suggested, Mrs. Clemm saw the way out of an immediate imbroglio with her relatives, and doubtless acquiesced willingly in an arrangement which she undoubtedly had much at heart. Virginia must have been at once terrified by the state that Edgar was in, and excited by the thought of being married, a step to adult dignity and an event in which, for the first time, she found herself indispensable and of genuine importance. But her disappointment at having no one but her mother present must have been extreme. The entire setting of a ceremony so dear to the feminine heart was entirely lacking. Not even a veil! One can imagine " some natural tears were shed." Yet worst of all, no one was to know afterward. It was a matter that later on had to be remedied by an ingenious device. In the meantime Edgar was calmed. His hints of suicide made in Mr. Kennedy's letter were probably renewed before Virginia and Mrs. Clemm.[480]

[479] Prof. J. A. Harrison gives the date as September 22, 1834, but Prof. Woodberry, 1835. The latter is correct as I have been at some pains to ascertain. The correspondence in the appendix from St. Paul's Parish shows no records of the marriage. Mrs. Clemm was afterward much " upset " when she was questioned about it.

[480] The reader will recall that Poe frequently threatened suicide in letters to John Allan, indirectly at least.

What could they do? The women would be terrified. So it happened that the momentous step was taken. Edgar Allan Poe was provided with a home; whether he had also gotten a wife in the full sense of the word has been doubted. No one will ever surely know. In striving to understand the man, however, the speculation is not entirely idle.

A few days after the very quiet and more than obscure ceremony, Poe must have written to Mr. White asking him to take him back on the *Messenger* and promising to behave, for Mr. White replied in a letter which reveals him as a kindly and wise friend whose patience had evidently been tried. A full understanding of the situation can best be arrived at by allowing White to speak for himself:

Richmond *Sept.* 29, 1835

DEAR EDGAR, — Would that it were in my power to unbosom myself to you in language such as I could on the present occasion, wish myself master of. I cannot do it — and therefore must be content to speak to you in my plain way.

That you are sincere in all your promises, I firmly believe. But Edgar, when you once again tread these streets, I have my fears that your resolves would fall through, — and that you would sip the juice, even till it stole away your senses. Rely on your own strength and you are gone! Look to your Maker for help, and you are safe.

How much I regretted parting with you, is unknown to anyone on this earth, except myself. I was attached to you — and am still, and willingly would I say return, if I did not dread the hour of separation very shortly again.

If you could make yourself contented to take up your quarters in my family, or any other private family, where liquor is not used, I should think there were hopes of you. — But, if you go to a tavern, or to any other place where it is used at table, you are not safe. I speak from experience.

You have fine talents, Edgar, — and you ought to have them respected as well as yourself. Learn to respect yourself, and you will very soon find that you are respected. Separate yourself from the bottle, and bottle companions, forever!

Tell me if you can and will do so — and let me hear that it is your fixed purpose never to yield to temptation.

If you should come to Richmond again, and again be an assistant in my office, it must be expressly understood by us that all engagements on my part would be dissolved, the moment you get drunk.

No man is safe who drinks before breakfast! No man can do so, and attend to business properly. . . .

I am your true Friend
T. W. White

E. A. Poe, *Esq.*

In the face of this letter, attempts to sweeten the reason for the first parting between Poe and White can scarcely be regarded as a contribution to biography, however kindly in motive. Mr. White addresses Poe almost in the tone of a father. Evidently the sight of the vacant chair in the office in Richmond caused the good man to yearn over the brilliant and wild young figure that had lately occupied it. What the real cause for Poe's "sipping" was, Mr. White could have had no idea. That his loss by Poe's absence was financial as well as personal is not sufficient to account for a ring in the lines that is not metallic. Poe must have made the promise, for in a few days he returned to Richmond. Mrs. Clemm made arrangements to follow speedily. Her protection, as she knew, was urgently needed. The house in Amity Street was broken up in October, 1835, and the ghosts of poor Henry and Grandmother Poe left to twitter there alone.

Upon his return to Richmond, Poe was welcomed back by Mr. White, who was doubtless reassured by hearing that his aunt and cousin were about to come from Baltimore to provide the domestic influence which the good man had so strongly advised. Mrs. Clemm and Virginia followed a short time afterward, and the newly married couple and mother-in-law took up their abode at a Mrs. Yarrington's boarding house, also overlooking Capitol Square, in the same neighborhood as Mrs. Poore's.

Mrs. Yarrington's was on the southeast corner of Bank and Eleventh Streets, a two-story brick house with large green shutters of a type then common in Richmond. The Poes occupied a front room above the parlor, the windows of which gave a pleasant view of the garden-like Capitol Grounds. The exact nature of the domestic arrangements is not known. Nothing was said about the marriage at all. Poe's friends were simply informed that his aunt and little cousin, who were dependent upon him, had come to live with him. Virginia did not impress those who

saw her as being a woman. Her actions were rather those of a merry schoolgirl, which, after all, was no more than could be expected of a child of thirteen. She was rather small for her age, "plump, pretty, but not especially so, with sweet and gentle manners and the simplicity of a child."

Rosalie, or "Rose Poe," as she was more generally known, was now twenty-five years old, but only about Virginia's age mentally. She was, it appears, somewhat of an annoyance to Edgar, who was then called "Buddie" by his family circle. Rose would follow him about with a patient, lamb-like admiration that was, at times, embarrassing. The games of childhood still occupied her attention, and she and Virginia played like two little girls together at the Mackenzies', screaming in a swing under the trees at the Hermitage or skipping rope together in the yard. A brief glimpse at this kindergarten eclogue of Poe's early married life has been preserved by Mrs. William Mackenzie, who remembered that one afternoon "Buddie" came up to the Hermitage to fetch home Virginia who met him with such "abandon" that Mrs. Mackenzie's Victorian sensibilities were shocked.

The sad truth seems to be that Virginia very closely resembled Rosalie. She, too, never fully developed. When she was twenty-six it was noticed by competent persons [481] that she did not appear to be over fifteen. Her mind developed more normally than her cousin's, but her body was never wholly mature. It was the reverse in the case of Rose.

In Richmond, even in 1835, it was remarked that the otherwise childish prettiness of Virginia was marred by a chalky-white complexion, a pastiness that later became waxen. Such a detail would be unimportant if it were not for the fact that she developed tuberculosis a few years later, and finally died of it. Virginia had been raised in the same house where Henry Poe died of the disease; a certain strain in the Poe family seems to have been predisposed to it, and the frequent short commons at Mrs. Clemm's was certainly a contributing factor. The affliction, the appearance, and some of the more ethereal and abnormal

[481] Elizabeth Oakes Smith and others of the *literati* in New York in the late '40s. When in Philadelphia, in 1842, a friend took her to be only fourteen.

characteristics of the little child-wife have been transferred into literature.

For Poe the "delicacy" which the advancing stages of the dread, but then fashionable and romantic, disease, conferred on his wife — the strange, chalky pallor tinged with a faint febrile rouge, the large, haunted liquid eyes — gradually acquired a peculiar fascination. From the wide and later on terror-stricken depths of those eyes, looked forth the spirit of one who had been robbed of life, a mind which had outgrown its body, simple, and yet wise enough to sense its own tragedy. Her whole being slowly became morbidly ethereal. The plumpness remained to the last,[482] yet somehow it suffered a subtle earth-change as if Death himself were amorous. To the man who was irretrievably linked to her, she became part and parcel of his own tragedy. His capacity for love, perhaps even his potentiality for sensuousness, was metamorphosed into a patient and tragic sympathy — the truly magnificent and loyal sorrow of one who beheld in his bed, in his garden, and at his table a constant and pathetic reminder of the omnipotence of the conqueror worm. On the whole, aside from his great art, his abiding tenderness for Virginia must remain as his greatest claim for a hold on the average human heart. She was the key that completely unlocked for him the house of shadows. She is the prototype of his heroines.

Virginia became his "Ligeia," his "Eulalie," "Eleonora," the sister in the *House of Usher,* perhaps even his "Annabel Lee," "Berenice," for instance.

> Berenice and I were cousins, and we grew up together in my paternal halls. Yet differently we grew, I, ill of health and buried in gloom, — she, agile, graceful, and overflowing with energy. . . . Oh, gorgeous yet fantastic beauty! Oh sylph amid the shrubberies of Arnheim. . . . And then— then all is mystery and terror, and a tale which should not be told. Disease — a fatal disease, fell like the simoon upon her frame; and even while I gazed upon her, the spirit of change swept over her, pervading her mind, her habits, and her character, and in a manner the most subtle and terrible, disturbing even the identity of her person. . . .

[482] See the picture of Virginia made *after* her death at Fordham in 1847, in Volume II.

So they all were, always subtly different from Virginia, and yet always the same; dying, corpse-like ladies usually related to their lovers, with the pale suggestion of incest just around the corner of the family tomb. It was a page, many pages, from his own experience.

It seems strange that this should have been so, but it must be remembered that Virginia Clemm in her actual appearance and life history approached the ideal of the desired feminine type of the time. Delicate, consumptive, given to fainting, and languidly lying upon invalid couches; saying incredibly refined and sentimental things, and listening to denatured artificial rhapsodies, — they wasted away in their wailing lovers' arms, leaving them stricken with sorrow or touched by madness to haunt the lonely grave, forever inconsolable.

Poe, as it happened, had married a little girl who, as time passed, approximated the fashionable ideal of the romantic Victorian heroine more nearly than any other whom he might have chosen. The real story of her tragedy is like an excerpt from a novel of the day. That Poe etherealized and enormously improved it, there can be no doubt. His particular etherealizations were not sentimental mockeries, because behind them lay the grim spiritual reality of a human tragedy that was horribly, pitiably true. That he sometimes sought to escape from it into the more robust world of reality, only proves that he was human after all.

In Richmond, Poe began in leisure hours to teach Virginia to chatter a little French and to play the harp. She sang in a sweet, high, girlish voice, trilling, as the fashion then was, like a bird. Mrs. Clemm did the work. But with the unwonted plenty and comparative peace at Mrs. Yarrington's she began to recover her health. The basket for a few months was temporarily forgotten, nor was she by any means oblivious, then or later, to the necessity of providing a background of respectability for Edgar. Now for a little time, however, she was able to sit in the parlor with the stuffed birds, rocking, in her white cap, her white starched cuffs, and her widow's weeds, while she sewed for the two over whom her grandly simple heart yearned maternally — chatting with the other boarders, or Mrs. Mackenzie — supported like a real lady

by a professional man, and entirely, impeccably genteel. On Sundays, Poe read by the parlor lamp while she sat opposite him, her hands unwontedly idle.

Through the week, Poe on his part was busy — for the time being completely absorbed by his work at his desk in the office of the *Southern Literary Messenger*. The young man was actually becoming a force, if not a figure, in contemporary national journalism and literature. During the year 1835 he published in the *Southern Literary Messenger* thirty-seven reviews of American and foreign books and periodicals, nine tales, four poems, and excerpts from his drama of *Politian*.[483] In addition to this there were critical notes and notices, a general editorial supervision of the contents of the magazine, and an active correspondence.

His work had already fallen inevitably into the two main categories in which it continued, from then on, to manifest itself; *i.e.*, the critical, and the creative. For the time being, due to the fact that his editorial duties gave him no leisure time, the creative faculty slumbered. Most of the tales and several of the poems were drawn from the reservoir of manuscript which Baltimore and the past had provided. The poems were minor affairs such as *To Sarah, To Mary, The Hymn* (from *Morella*) or excerpts from *Politian*. One or two new stories of minor importance were produced, but, for the most part, they were drawn from the already prepared *Tales of the Folio Club*. The bulk of the work, however, was critical. It was in the pages of the *Messenger* that Poe first appeared in the American arena as the greatest literary gladiator of his time. American critics up until that era had formerly conducted their mock combats with blunt or, at best, lead weapons. Poe now appeared in their midst with a bright sword that bit deep and drew blood. He began to be feared, hated, and admired. He was, despite peculiar personal reservations, a *Humanist*.

The texts which the young man in Richmond reviewed in 1835–36 the world has for the most part comfortably contrived to forget, a fact which has pulled the same damp blanket of oblivion over the work of their only able critic. Yet this fact, natu-

[483] The bibliography is taken from Harrison, and is probably incomplete.

rally enough, did not then detract from its contemporary importance. The books, periodicals, speeches, and poems which Poe passed upon in the 1830s, constituted his education in the current literature of the day and a soft bone on which to cut his eye-teeth. For the most part, with the single exception of Carlyle, time has confirmed his judgments.

His aptitude for the work was deeply rooted in the intricate folds of his nature. In the first place, he had a genuine respect for real literature that endowed him at times with a sixth sense as to the acid effect of time. His background, from a constant and early reading of foreign periodicals,[484] was genuinely cosmopolitan instead of local. Great critics of the English reviews, particularly Macaulay, were his models. His artistic idealism and his materialistic philosophy gave him a hatred of cant; and his youthful experience with a provincial aristocracy in a small Southern town made him dislike snobs — even from New England. Poe had a genuine love for literature; it was his great passion; he was in earnest about it. He could not therefore abide dilettantes, and it was insufferable to him that the prize for which he had starved and worked should be dropped even ephemerally into the hands of those whose sole art consisted in the clever manipulation of little feeble "puffing." The sappy sentimentalism of the time, although it did not fail to leave its mark on him, was nevertheless, the great god Sham against which he mainly tilted. As a great lyricist in prose and poetry he could not abide a mock emotion, and he was unerring in smelling it out. Mixed with all this was a tendency to the pedantic that became more marked, as the necessity for confirming the belief in his own logical mental processes began to require a secret assurance, and above, and finally dominating all, was an ego that felt itself exalted because it was able to abase. It was an almost insane desire for fame, the last infirmity of noble minds.

Out of such an exalted head the critic on the *Messenger* was suddenly born. Mr. White received protests. From time to time he and others remonstrated. Libel suits might follow — enemies would be, in fact, were made — even New York began to take

[484] This familiarity extended back at least as far as 1824.

notice. But the subscription list bounded from three, well up into four figures; esteemed contemporaries watched and reprinted. The audience became large, very large. The salary if it did not leap, at least wriggled to $15 a week and a few extras. While Virginia and Rose skipped rope at the Hermitage, the pen at the *Messenger* went back again and again into the ink and the acid. At last, it was making an immediate and an effective noise.

For some time after his return from Baltimore, Poe must have kept his promise to Mr. White. Years later, J. W. Fergusson, one of the printers, remarked, " There never was a more perfect gentleman than Mr. Poe when he was sober," (but at other times,) " he would just as soon lie down in the gutter as anywhere else." The " other times " must have come later, and perhaps cast some light on the reasons for Poe's finally parting with Mr. White. Through the Winter of 1835–36, indeed till some time late in 1836, there could not have been many lapses, if any at all. The proof lies in the crowded columns of the *Messenger.*

Poe found most of his social relaxation with the Mackenzies at the Hermitage, at the Sullys', and with Dr. Robert G. Cabell. His boyhood friend, Bob Stanard, " Helen's " son, he regarded with a peculiar affection which was heartily returned. But there were some rents in the social pavilion which let in a stinging rain. Two of his old schoolmates refused to attend with him a party given by the mother-in-law of General Scott,[485] and some of the old hostility from the University and from friends of the Allans troubled him. Troubled him more, perhaps, than will ever be known. Part of his spare time was spent at Sanxey's bookstore or with Eliza White, who was rather a beauty and bookishly inclined. She was the daughter of his employer, so both inclination and interest dictated that he should be attentive. A great deal of nonsense was afterward talked about this, based largely on the fact that the lady was never married. Poe was undoubtedly intimate with her, and she was present, years later, as an old friend, at the death-bed of Virginia at Fordham. The effort to throw a romantic atmosphere about every woman with whom the poet came in contact on an intimate basis is, of course, nonsense.

[485] A Mrs. Mayo with some pretense to " literary " fame.

Of the house and the domestic circle at Mrs. Yarrington's, we know very little. Certain it is, though, that both Poe and Mrs. Clemm longed for their own home and continued to work for it. One of the cousins, George Poe, of Mobile, Alabama, was now in turn appealed to about the beginning of the new year. The glimpse is rather intimate:

DEAR SIR, — I take the liberty of addressing you in behalf of a mutual relative, Mrs. William Clemm, late of Baltimore — and at her earnest solicitation. . . .

Having lately established myself in Richmond, and undertaken the Editorship of the *Southern Literary Messenger,* and my circumstances having thus become better than formerly, I have ventured to offer my Aunt a home. She is now therefore in Richmond, with her daughter Virginia, and is, for the present boarding at the house of a Mrs. Yarrington. My salary is only, at present, about $800 per ann: and the charge per week for our board (Mrs. Clemm's, her daughter's and my own), is $9. I am thus particular in stating my precise situation that you may be the better enabled to judge in regard to the propriety of granting the request I am now about to make for Mrs. Clemm.

It is now ascertained that if Mrs. Clemm could obtain the means of opening, herself, a boarding-house in this city, she could support herself and daughter comfortably with something to spare. But a small capital would be necessary for an undertaking of this nature, and many of the widows of our first people are engaged in it and find it profitable. I am willing to advance, for my own part, $100, and I believe that William and R. Poe will advance $100. If then you would so far aid her in her design as to loan her, yourself, $100, she will have sufficient to commence with. I will be responsible for the repayment of the sum, in a year from this date, if you can make it convenient to comply with her request. . . . I feel deeply for the distresses of Mrs. Clemm, and I am sure *you* will feel interested in relieving them.

(*Signature cut off*)

P. S. — I am the son of David Poe, Jr., Mrs. Clemm's brother.

On the receipt of such letters as these — several of the relatives did respond — the reason for keeping the first marriage secret now becomes clear. Once married, Poe would be appealing on behalf of himself. With the marriage a secret he could, with good grace, as a relative supporting his aunt and cousin out of the kindness of his heart, ask the rest of the family to chip in. It was, perhaps, a justifiable subterfuge. Mrs. Clemm certainly needed help.

That she and Poe connived, there can be no doubt. Things on the whole were looking up for Edgar. A few days after the letter to George Poe he wrote to Kennedy:

Richmond, *Jan.* 22, 1836

DEAR SIR, — Although I have never yet acknowledged the receipt of your letter of advice some months ago, it was not without great influence on me. I have since then, fought the enemy manfully, and am now, in every respect, comfortable and happy. I know you will be pleased to hear this. My health is better than for years past, my mind is fully occupied, my pecuniary difficulties have vanished. I have a fair prospect of success — in a word all is right. I shall never forget to whom all this hapiness is in a great degree to be attributed. I know that without your timely aid I should have sunk under my trials. Mr. White is very liberal and beside my salary of $520, pays me liberally for extra work, so that I have nearly $800. Next year that is at the commencement of the second volume, I am to get $1000. Besides this, I receive from publishers, nearly all new publications. My friends in Richmond have received me with open arms, and my reputation is extending — especially in the South. Contrast all this with those circumstances of absolute despair in which you found me, and you will see how great reason I have to be grateful to God and to yourself. . . .

Yours very truly
EDGAR A. POE

J. P. Kennedy

During the Spring of 1836 Poe conducted, among others, a heavy correspondence with Beverley Tucker of Williamsburg, Virginia, a critic who admired his work but was careful in his praise. Some comments which Tucker made to White in a letter about Poe, caused the young author some uneasiness as to the effect they might have on his employer. Poe consequently wrote explaining the situation to Tucker who immediately responded by writing White a reassuring letter containing some additional good advice meant for Poe. The manuscript of *The Tales of the Folio Club* which still remained with Carey & Lea in Philadelphia had not been published by them. In February, 1836, the manuscript was returned by them to Poe with one story missing. Most of those stories had appeared in the *Messenger.*

Poe now wrote to J. K. Paulding in New York City, asking him

to submit the volume to Harpers, which he did. The book was refused, and on March 3, 1836, Mr. Paulding wrote to White:

> . . . I regret this decision of the Harpers, though I have not opposed it, because I do not wish to lead them into any measure that might be accompanied by a loss, and felt as I would feel for myself in a similar case. . . .

Exactly two weeks later Paulding wrote to Poe saying he was returning the manuscript in a box of books that Haynes was sending for review. Poe, it appears, had requested Paulding to submit it to another publisher but he was unable to do so. In this letter, he suggests to Poe, "I think it would be worth your while, if other engagements permit, to undertake a Tale in a couple of volumes, for that is the magical number." Out of this suggestion grew *Arthur Gordon Pym,* which shortly afterward began to appear serially in the *Messenger.* It was the only notable piece of creative writing which occupied Poe in Richmond. An effort was now made to get the *Tales* published in England through Sanders & Ortley of New York. Poe's friend, Edward W. Johnson of the College of South Carolina performed the good offices of a go-between, and the New York publishers were ready to send the book to England in the Fall of 1836, when Poe asked to have it returned for further revision. He was not satisfied to let it go to England as it stood. Nothing further came of the matter. In the meanwhile, Poe was married a second time to Virginia. This time the ceremony was public. It took place at Mrs. Yarrington's house, in Richmond, on May 16, 1836.

The reasons for a second ceremony, although complex, are not at all mysterious. As we have seen, the chief reason for the clandestine marriage in September, 1835, had been the opposition to it on the part of the Poe connection. Since then Poe and Mrs. Clemm had been receiving contributions "to help Mrs. Clemm," Edgar acting as the nephew who had charitably assumed the chief responsibility of maintaining his Aunt Maria and *Cousin* Virginia. No mention was made of her being his wife. The cousin Poes would by no means have contributed toward setting up a house for a young man already on his own salary so that he could live

with a full cousin who was in their judgment too young to marry. It would never do now suddenly to throw off the mask and reveal the fact that the relatives had simply been fooled. Family complications would follow, when it was important to keep on good terms. The easiest solution, therefore, was simply to have a new ceremony. By the removal from Baltimore the influence of Neilson Poe had been dodged, and Poe now had the argument that he was already supporting his aunt and cousin. In addition to this, the revelation in Richmond that he was already married to a little girl when she was only thirteen would have been extremely uncomfortable, and the statement might have been met with doubt. There is also the very likely possibility that Poe and Virginia had not been living together as man and wife, but that there had been an understanding at the time of the first marriage that he was to wait till Virginia was mature. Both Virginia and Mrs. Clemm undoubtedly desired the social distinction of even a simple public ceremony. The other affair without ring, cake, or guests could scarcely have seemed a marriage to them at all. Now, with Edgar's unexpected " affluence," a regular marriage was possible. By a second marriage all of these difficulties were solved and an endless round of explanations avoided. But the extreme youth of the bride was still a source of embarrassment and was carefully concealed.

The marriage bond, which was signed in the Hustings Court of the City of Richmond on May 16, 1836, shows that oath was made before Charles Howard, the Clerk of Court, by Thomas W. Cleland as witness that " Virginia E. Clemm is of the full age of twenty-one years." She was, as a matter of fact, thirteen years, nine months and one day old.[486] The discrepancy is glaring. Cleland, who was a friend and fellow boarder of Poe, is known to have been a pious Presbyterian and he would scarcely have taken oath to what he did not believe to be true. Despite the extremely youthful appearance of the bride, he must have been assured of her age by Poe, Mrs. Clemm, and, of course, Virginia. She, poor child, was probably eager enough for a " real wedding " to say anything " Muddie " and " Buddy " suggested.

[486] For a discussion of Virginia's date of birth see Woodberry, 1909, vol. I, page 137.

On the day of the marriage, Jane Foster,[487] a friend of Mrs. Yarrington, who lived outside of Richmond, came to visit her friends in town. She found Mrs. Yarrington and Mrs. Clemm busy baking a wedding cake and was informed that a marriage was to be performed at the house that day. Jane watched the cake while the two older women concerned themselves about the other simple preparations. Late in the afternoon, the Virginia "evening," the guests began to arrive. Mr. White and his daughter Eliza, Mr. and Mrs. Cleland, William McFarland and John Fergusson, the printers on the *Messenger,* Mrs. Yarrington, Mrs. Clemm, and Jane Foster constituted the little party. The marriage was performed in the boarding house parlor by the Reverend Amasa Converse, a Presbyterian divine, at that time the editor of the *Southern Religious Telegraph.* Virginia was dressed in a traveling dress and a white hat with a veil, Poe was, as usual, in a black suit and the omnipresent black stock. Jane Foster, who was herself scarcely more than a child, remembered the very youthful appearance of Virginia. The nupital scene was reflected in a looking glass on the parlor wall, and little Miss Foster was surprised to note that the mirror did not show Virginia to be any older when she passed out than when she walked in. Marriage, she was sure in her naïve way, would magically remedy the contrast between the little bride and the mature bridegroom, for Poe was twenty-seven. The Reverend Amasa Converse remarked that the bride had a pleasing air, but *did* seem young. Mrs. Clemm he noted as "being polished, dignified, and agreeable in her bearing" and that she gave Virginia away "freely." In the parlor after the ceremony Mrs. Clemm was in her element when her fellow boarders were called in while the happy event was announced, and wine and cake were served. It was doubtless then that the Reverend Amasa noted that the widow was "agreeable in her bearing."

[487] Afterward Mrs. Stocking. The account of the wedding given here is taken from various documentary sources and from an account given personally to the author in Richmond in July, 1925, by a niece of Mrs. Jane Stocking (Miss Foster) who was fond of relating the details of the occasion to members of her family. Mrs. Stocking was a close friend of Mrs. Yarrington, who was a planter's daughter and risked the anger of her family by "marrying beneath her." In order to help her husband "to get along faster" she had started a boarding house.

After the humble felicitations, a hack was called to the door, and Virginia and Edgar drove off together on their honeymoon. One catches a glimpse of the waving hands of the boarders, the fat stack of the little, wood-burning locomotive throwing sparks on Virginia's traveling dress on the short journey to Petersburg, and a round of entertainments at various friends' houses in the quiet little town basking in the sunlight and perfume of a Virginia May. The paulownia trees were in bloom.

The Poes spent their honeymoon at the house of Mr. Hiram H. Haines of the Petersburg, Virginia, *Constellation,* Democratic in its journalistic policy, we solemnly learn. There were also visits to the house of Edwin V. Sparhawk, another journalistic friend, and Dr. William M. Robinson entertained them at a party and noted that Poe's conversation was brilliant. Poe no doubt noticed, although he enjoyed it, that the conversation of the others was somewhat bucolic. He was already longing for more cultivated fields in which to converse largely.

Before the end of May, the young editor and his child wife returned to Richmond. The Stanards, the Sullys, and young Dr. Ambler called, the latter, doubtless recalling two little boys who once swam together in Shockoe Creek twenty years before. Mr. White promised the young husband a raise in salary. He was to receive " $20 after November."

It was now Summer, and the hot valley of the James took on the glittering green of June woodlands and the pied hues of many-colored grass. The calmest hours that Poe was ever to know in manhood were swiftly passing, a brief respite between poverties and tragedies, the memory of this time he has preserved in the tropical idyl of *Eleonora:*

> She whom I loved in youth, and of whom I now pen calmly and distinctly these remembrances, was the sole daughter of the only sister of my mother long departed. Eleonora was the name of my cousin. We had always dwelled together, beneath a tropical sun, in the Valley of the Many-Colored Grass. No unguided footstep ever came upon that vale; for it lay far away among a range of giant hills. . . . Thus it was that we lived all alone, knowing nothing of the world without the valley, — I, and my cousin, and her mother.

"Knowing nothing of the world . . ." unfortunately it was true. Now they were married, Poe was making every effort to have his own home where the illusion of the secluded valley might be continued. Only a few weeks after the return from the honeymoon he wrote Kennedy, again unfolding his domestic and financial circumstances to the faithful friend in Baltimore.

Richmond, *Va.*, Jan. 7, 1836

DEAR SIR, — Having got into a little temporary difficulty I venture to ask you, once more, for aid, rather than apply to any of my new friends in Richmond. Mr. White, having purchased a new house at $10,000., made propositions to my aunt to rent it to her (*sic*), and to board himself and family with her. This plan was highly advantageous to us, and, having accepted it, all arrangements were made and I obtained credit for some furniture, etc., to the amount of $200, above what little money I had. But upon examination of the premises purchased, it appears that the house will barely be large enough for one family, and the scheme is laid aside, leaving me now in debt, (to a small amount), without those means of discharging it upon which I had depended.

In this dilemma I would be greatly indebted to you for the loan of $100. for six months. . . .

"But upon examination of the premises purchased" — one cannot help but smile a little, and yet want to cry too with Mrs. Clemm and Virginia over the disappointment about the "premises" so carefully examined *after* the purchase had been made! One wonders — Mr. White would scarcely buy a house before he had looked at it. "This plan," says Poe, "was highly advantageous *to us*." Then he continues to Kennedy:

. . . Have you heard anything farther in relation to Mrs. Clemm's estate?

Our *Messenger* is thriving beyond all expectations, and I myself have every prospect of success. It is our design to issue, as soon as possible, a number of the Magazine consisting entirely of articles from our most distinguished *literati*. . . . Could you not do me so great a favor as to send me a scrap, however small, from your portfolio? Your name is of the greatest influence in that region where we direct our greatest efforts — in the South.

Any little reminiscence, tale, *jeu d'esprit*, historical anecdote,—

anything, in short, *with your name,* will answer all our purposes. I presume you have heard of my marriage.

With sincere respect & esteem
Yours truly,
EDGAR A. POE

"Our *Messenger*" may have been thriving, but Mrs. Clemm and Virginia shared only in the glory. The grand scheme of the $10,000 boarding house having been abandoned, perforce, the little family moved from Mrs. Yarrington's on Capitol Square to "a cheap tenement on Seventh Street,"[488] where they sublet rooms. Mrs. Clemm went back to her dressmaking; there were generally a few boarders at the table. Virginia was a little more silent now, the honeymoon was over, some of the patches of many-colored grass were probably becoming a little parched, even for her, life had a few surprises. She was trying as hard as she could to grow up —

> Nearly twenty years after this time there were persons living on Main Street who remembered almost daily to have seen about the Old Market, in business hours, a tall, dignified looking woman, with a market basket on one arm, while on the other hung a little girl with a round ever-smiling face, who was addressed as "Mrs. Poe!" She, too, carried a basket.[488]

Mrs. Yarrington's parlor mirror had been right after all. The marriage had worked no magic for Virginia.

Poe was now seldom to be found at home. "Graceful, and with dark, curling hair and magnificent eyes, wearing a Byron collar and looking every inch a 'poet,'" he preferred the recitations of Eliza White doing "Lady Macbeth" in the house that was too small for two families, the lurid remarks of journalistic brethren at the office, the excitement of a correspondence with J. Q. Adams or Mrs. Sigourney, supper at the Sullys', or an evening at the *Court House Tavern.* There were many places he could go, and every place he went he was offered wine. Sometimes he took it. Then he was very ill and went home, to spend several days in

[488] Mrs. Susan Archer Weiss, *Home Life of Poe.* A few facts regarding Richmond occurrences of which Mrs. Weiss was reliably informed are culled here from an otherwise inaccurate biography.

bed. " Dear Eddie's health was so bad, no, he could not get down to the office to-day," was Mrs. Clemm's version. And she loved him so much that at last she came to believe it, although she knew it was not true.

Towards the end of 1836 the days in bed became more frequent. Mr. White it appears became annoyed and then alarmed. Yet he was loath to force a parting. His young editor had become invaluable. There was a good deal of idle gossip about it all, — about Poe, the Allans, Elmira, Eliza White, Virginia, and Mrs. Clemm. " There was a general prejudice against her on account of her having made or consented to the match between her little daughter and a man of Poe's age and dissipated habits." [488]

As usual, the gossips with the unerring instinct of their race, had aimed the barb for the heart. For back of it all, then and forever afterward, remaining even after Israfel was removed from the scene, was the grand simple heart, the strong arms, and the maternal bosom of Maria Clemm. If there be anything at all in the tradition of the test of sacrifice and abnegation, she loved him better than all the other women who crossed his path. She it was who never doubted or faltered in her belief in the immortal part of the man; who, after the mortal had been removed, continued nobly to cherish the memory of his genius. She washed for him, worked for him, begged for him, nursed him and comforted him. Before her simple " Eddie, Oh God, my dear Eddie! " — all the mud of Mrs. Ellet, the vitriol of Griswold, and the sugar of Helen Whitman is dried up and blown away while Mrs. Clemm's cry remains to *keen* in our ears. Small persons, who called upon her later when smug society and the legacy of fame had driven her half crazy, saw nothing in her but an old bereaved woman with a broad face, roughened hands, and an ignorant manner of speech.[489] Pharisees like Stoddard departed making long the fringes of their phylacteries — laughing, and thanking God they were not like that. Thackeray, who knew nothing at all of one Virginian, drew large genteel audiences in

[489] See R. H. Stoddard's account of Mrs. Clemm, after Poe's death. *Lippincott's Magazine*, January, 1889, page 112. One of the most self-complacent articles ever written.

Richmond, and exchanged aristocratic repartee with ladies in Charleston — and departed. Charles Dickens returned to the States on his second tour. In a certain obscure Episcopal Church Home in Baltimore, erected on the same spot where a great poet had died only a few years before, the author of *Bleak House* called on a tearful old woman whose last days were being prolonged by Christian charity. It was "Muddie," whose reward for exorcising the demons down under the sea, was the contempt of mankind and a saintlike face. Mr. Dickens left behind a present of money pressed into a rheumatic old hand. Only he and Lowell were fully aware who it was that had made the croaks of the raven in *Barnaby Rudge* audible to the entire world.

By December, 1836, Richmond and the South no longer offered a broad enough field for a rising young author and editor who desired to try sinking his plowshare into more fertile literary soil. During the year, Poe's tremendous critical fertility had continued.

No less than eighty-three reviews, six poems, four essays, and three stories had appeared in the *Messenger,*[483] besides there was correspondence which its editorial duties necessitated and the writing of the narrative of *Arthur Gordon Pym* that Poe hoped to sell to Harpers after publishing it in the *Messenger* in serial form. The reviews ranged through almost the entire gamut of contemporary literature from *Recollections of S. T. Coleridge*[490] to Mrs. Sigourney's *Letters to Young Ladies.* The poems were mostly old ones revived, some of them changed into masterpieces. *To Helen* had appeared in March, *Irene,* or *The Sleeper* in May, and *Israfel* now wonderfully perfected in August. Besides this, there had been the lovely sonnet, *Zante,* and some additional scenes from *Politian.* Poe's study of poetical criticism was having a memorable effect upon his own early work. His poems were now pruned and grafted to last through the winter of time. The stories, *Metzengerstein, The Homo-Camelopard* and the like, were still

[490] *Letters, Conversation, and Recollections of S. T. Coleridge,* New York, published by Harper & Brothers, No. 28 Cliff Street, 1836. Another Harper book reviewed by Poe who was anxious to publish *Arthur Gordon Pym* through Harpers. Poe was much in debt to this book for many ideas he later developed. Poe's critical debt to Coleridge cannot be too strongly stressed.

drawn from the old reserve supply, but the essays were new. Chief of these was *Maelzell's Chess-Player* in which he exposed the method by which a dummy chessman, that had gone the rounds of American cities winning games with living opponents, was operated. It is possible that Poe's interest in this automaton was early aroused by an article in the Baltimore *North American* to which Henry Poe had contributed in 1827. Many persons had been more mystified than amused by the maneuvers of the automatic man, and the *exposé,* although only partly correct, created quite a little furor. It was the first of Poe's work in which he emerged as the unerring, abstract reasoner, and foreshadowed the method he followed later in his detective stories such as the *Murders in the Rue Morgue,* a method which has been embalmed in the triumphs of "Sherlock Holmes."

Pinakidia, another type of contribution, were selections from the author's notebook, selections which throw an interesting sidelight on his literary and journalistic pilferings, nearly always from secondary sources. By a mistake, obviously made in the composing room, they were printed in the *Messenger* as "original" instead of the opposite.

Like so many other literary and curious persons of his epoch, Poe kept a commonplace book. Into it went from time to time cullings from a thousand books, magazines and newspapers, copies of which came under his editorial eye. Nor was he by any means blind to the dusty shelves and remote alcoves of libraries public and private. He made the most of, and he improved such opportunities for browsing as *Pinakidia* and the later *Marginalia* show. These grains of gold sifted out of dust and refuse were not so valuable in themselves, but they provided an inexhaustible source upon which he drew for items of curious knowledge, for a parade of learning, and for quotations that temporarily lulled or alarmed even the learned. Above all, here was the store of ammunition for charges of plagiarism which he loved to ram home. From his careful gleaning over wide fields, there was scarcely any figure in poetry, or any idea, which Poe could not show had been used before. Often the charge was true; always it was plausible. In the great shallow lakes of American crudity, the well of

erudition of the young Richmond critic seemed deep — even profound.

But there was something more to it than that. This habit of clipping and noting exercised a valuable curiosity. Out of a dead book or a banal news-sheet, Poe developed the habit of culling the one living incident, the pertinent fact, or the picturesque scene. He remembered it, and when the time came the shot was there, carefully greased and labelled, in the right locker. It was later always delivered with telling effect, and in a direction that associated it with the living thought of his time. That the French of obscure titles, the original sources, or the precise wording of quotations were sometimes garbled, is of importance only in the cemetery of the scholastic mind, for, by the living use of such matter, Poe frequently conferred upon it the only gleam of vitality which it ever possessed. Even in 1836, he stood out boldly and alone as the only arresting critic of contemporary literature in the United States.

His rise to that position had been meteoric. It was the *Southern Literary Messenger* which had conferred upon him the opportunity to claim the title. In less than two years that obscure magazine claimed the attention of the nation on an equal footing with *The New Englander* and the *Knickerbocker,* and was even beginning to disturb the complacent local religion of the *North American Review,* to which, heretofore, nothing south of the Delaware had been audible.

In the late Fall of the previous year (1835), Theodore S. Fay, a young author who had many friends in the literary circles of New York and among the editors of the Knickerbocker journals, published a novel called *Norman Leslie.* It was greeted by a howl of metropolitan acclaim that found the usual servile echo in the provinces. The book was unusually poor, and the reverberations in the canyon of criticism were more than usually grand. In December, 1835, Poe reviewed *Norman Leslie* in the columns of the *Messenger.* Both the book, and, by implication, the author, were reduced to the light powder of which they were actually composed, but in a manner so trenchant, so vividly interesting and unanswerable, that the public in general be-

came interested, subscribed in numbers, and eagerly hoped for more.

The New York papers, at first, maintained a discreet and dignified silence, but the cat was out of the bag and scratching so hard that the pose of dignified silence became too painful to maintain. On April 9, 1836, the *New York Mirror* with a display of no less than four scornfully pointing, printed hands drew attention to a column on another page in which Poe was satirized in his own style for his methods of criticism, his minute analyses, and his accusations of plagiarism. The notice itself accused him of striving for notoriety " by the loudness of abuse," hinting that he was actuated by jealousy because he " knows by experience what it is to write a successless novel." This doubtless referred to some rumor of the collected tales which Harpers had refused.

In the April number of the *Messenger* Poe replied. The statement about " a successless novel " not being true, was easily refuted, and the young editor took the occasion to make his views on the necessity for a broad attitude in criticism clear:

> . . . We are becoming boisterous and arrogant in the pride of a too speedily assumed literary freedom. We throw off with the most presumptuous and unmeaning hauteur *all* deference whatever to foreign opinion — we forgot, in the puerile inflation of vanity, that *the world* is the true theatre of the biblical histrio — we get up a hue and cry about the necessity of encouraging native writers of merit — we blindly fancy that we can accomplish this by indiscriminate puffing of good, bad, and indifferent, without taking the trouble to consider that what we choose to denominate encouragement is thus, by its general application, precisely the reverse. In a word, so far from being ashamed of the many disgraceful literary failures to which our own inordinate vanities and misapplied patriotism have lately given birth, and so far from deeply lamenting that these daily puerilities are of home manufacture, we adhere pertinaciously to our original blindly conceived idea, and thus often find ourselves in the gross paradox of liking a stupid book the better because sure enough, its stupidity is American.

Poe's view that the world, by which he unconsciously meant the world of European culture, was the only background which provided the correct perspective in which to judge one's own work or that of others, was, of course, by no means new. It has been

consciously or unconsciously adopted by many of the greatest writers of other periods, and it jibed with the private opinions of many readers at the time. But in some quarters it was essentially uncomfortable. In such a "world vista" as Poe proposed, what would become of America's literary Holy Land, New England? Besides this, the new prophet had arisen on the wrong side of Jordan. In certain quarters the stone heaps were prepared. The *New York Commercial Advertiser* pronounced him anathema. W. G. Clark of the *Philadelphia Gazette* pounced on him and the war was even carried south of the James. For the most part, though, the South rallied around him. For it, the position of the Jordan was reversed. But Poe understood that, and how little it meant. He had raised the *view halloo* under the palace windows and he longed to follow the quarry whither it fled — northward.

Once dip your pen in acid and it becomes difficult to convince even a friend that a compliment is not meant for an innuendo. Poe's reputation for critical savageness has been over-strained. A letter by Poe to a complaining contemporary in September, 1836,[491] provides an answer to those who complain of his severity which an examination of the columns of the *Messenger* also refutes. For the most part, indeed almost without exception, time has confirmed the justness of his criticism. *Sartor Resartus* alone survives. Nor would it be reasonable to expect Edgar Allan Poe to be in sympathy with the style of Thomas Carlyle. It is doubtful if Poe ever descended into those turgid and strangely agitated depths. Yet here was the only "world book" that met his view.

It was the "world view," however, that moved Poe northward in 1837. Ten years before, he had written from Fortress Monroe to John Allan, "Richmond and the United States were too narrow a sphere and the world shall be my theater."[492] This fine ambition had never died. Poe knew the South too well to put any value on its acclaim. He was not deceived because three, or even

[491] Poe to the *Richmond Courier* and *Daily Compiler,* Richmond, September 2, 1836, . . . "But this charge of indiscriminate 'cutting and slashing' *has never been adduced* — except in four instances, while the rigid justice and impartiality of our Journal had been lauded even *ad nauseam* . . ." etc. The letter is detailed and convincing.

[492] *Valentine Museum Collection,* letter No. 7, Poe to John Allan, December 22, 1828.

five thousand persons [493] there had subscribed to the *Messenger.* That was mainly because out of an honest literary opinion he had happened to criticize the North. There were probably not five hundred souls all told, anywhere, who knew what he was really talking about. South of the Potomac, literature was "cherished" as the decent avocation of a gentleman who might otherwise have to work with his hands. Haynes and Simms met the same situation in South Carolina a little later — and lost. What could one do in a section which gave its praise easily and so took it with a private grain of salt, — where every crowing plantation Chanticleer or twittering Jenny Wren was acclaimed as a poet; a *province* that talked of "Southern Literature" and preferred foreign books, a locality whose estimate of style was theatrically forensic? [246] One could live there comfortably and become, possibly, an obscurely honored local bard, the schoolboy's aversion and the old maid's pride. Horrible thought! Every day that he had spent in England, every page of the foreign reviews in the loft of *Ellis & Allan,* every contact with the great, wide, oblivious world cried out against it. "The world shall be my theater!" and the world won. In January, 1837, the following notice appeared in the *Southern Literary Messenger:*

> Mr. Poe's attention being called in another direction, he will decline, with the present number, the Editorial duties on the *Messenger.* His Editorial Notices for this month end with Professor Anthon's *Cicero* — [494] what follows is from another hand. With the best wishes to the Magazine, and to its few foes as well as many friends, he is now desirous of bidding all parties a peaceable farewell.

Mr. Poe's urge for exit, however, was not purely literary. Encounters with the glass toward the end of 1836 had evidently been at least occasional, consequently his health was again "bad." Despite his increased salary, now over $1000 a year, he had, it seems, involved himself in debt. Mrs. Clemm's boarding

[493] Prof. J. A. Harrison, *Life and Letters,* vol. I, p. 125, gives the increase of subscribers on the *Messenger* as from seven hundred to five thousand. Prof. Woodberry is more conservative and puts the last figure at thirty-five hundred. The last is correct. Poe gave the larger.

[494] Poe was expecting to go to New York, where Prof. Anthon lived, and had therefore probably picked his book for favorable notice.

house venture was evidently not a paying one. Increasing fame had also added a certain arrogance that even his friends deprecated. Mr. White had been patient, but probably annoyed by irregularities; and no one enjoys being patronized. They parted friends, however. The young editor's copy on hand was to be exhausted rapidly, as the pages of the *Messenger* show, but Poe was to continue some contributions. He was particularly anxious to finish the serials of *Arthur Gordon Pym*.

About the middle of January, 1857, we find Poe in bed winding up his correspondence and making his last acceptances for the *Messenger,* articles which did not please Mr. White.[495] There is a tradition that Poe asked to be reinstated but it is a doubtful one that would naturally be cherished by a magazine. During his régime it had increased its circulation from 500 to 3500 copies,[493] Poe had developed, by valuable experience, some well-defined ideas about the possibilities of a truly national publication. He was the first journalist to conceive of a magazine on a huge modern scale. That was the great idea he hoped to put into operation. He saw clearly, even then, that it would have to be done from Philadelphia or New York.

What little furniture they had was probably sold. "Muddie" and Virginia accompanied him. The little wife had matured considerably. There is a brief silence, and then we find them in New York. In Richmond he left behind him a few virulent enemies and a large number of friends. The great experiment had begun.

[495] See the correspondence between White and Poe in January, 1837.

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